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Evaluation of relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshmen first semester grade point average for students with disabilities

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EVALUTATION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS AND COLLEGE FRESHMAN FIRST SEMESTER GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

By

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Abstract

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Evaluation of Relationship between Self-Advocacy Skills and College Freshman First Semester Grade Point Average for Students with Disabilities

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This study was important in evaluating the relationship between self-advocacy skill and college freshman Grade Point Average (GPA) in Montana for students with disabilities. Research in this area was found to be incomplete and limited. The purpose of this study was to discover if there are inadequacies in students with disabilities preparation for higher education as per self-advocacy skills and how they related to GPA Individuals considered to have a disability in secondary education may be deemed ineligible for services and supports as adults. Secondary and post-secondary institutions rarely collaborated to establish consistent standards. The contrast between the relatively high level of assistance provided under IDEA and much lower level of assistance provided in post-secondary environments posed many transition issues for individuals with disabilities.

This study utilized a quantitative research design and implemented a 28 question survey for data collection. The sample was drawn from students of the 14 public two and four-year institutions of higher education currently within the Montana University System (MUS). The sample also consisted of the seven tribal colleges and three community colleges. Only students having experienced an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the secondary setting and over the age of 18 were used in the data analysis. Results of this research indicated positive correlations with self-advocacy skills and first semester freshmen GPA for students with disabilities making the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. The evidence presented in this research supported the benefit of practices such as: (a) self-determination training (b) inclusion in general education programs (c) providing vocational training and preparation in high school (d) social skills training and support; and (e) transition planning that began in early high school.

This study was built on, and added to, the field of transition research and education. Leaders in both secondary and post-secondary education may be able to use the outcomes of this study for specific transition practices to assist students transitioning into post-secondary education. Specifically, educational leaders may use the outcomes of this study to aid education professionals, disabilities services, parents, and students in successful education pursuits for students with disabilities.

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Chapter One

Statement of the Problem

Background. For the past 30 years, national attention and concern regarding educational opportunity for all people, including individuals with disabilities, has dramatically increased. Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 took effect July 26, 1992 (Babbit, 2004). According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2008), the ADA prohibited private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions and privileges of employment. The ADA underwent further revisions including the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). The ADAAA became effective on January 1, 2009 and made a number of changes to the definition of disability, however, the above discriminating factors above remained the same (EEOC, 2014).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was yet another initiative to increase opportunity for individuals with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act implied educational programs receiving federal financial assistance must not discriminate against otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2011). Once a student met individual institutional academic and technical standards congruent with admissions or participation requirements, the student was considered to be otherwise qualified (Heyward, 1998). Federal legislation such as the ADA in 1990 and the Amendment and Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) increased accessibility for persons with disabilities to post-secondary education

(AHEAD, 2006). As a result, the number of post-secondary students reporting a disability increased dramatically, tripling between 1978 and 1994 from 2.6% to 9.2% (AHEAD, 2006).

A federally subsidized institution was required to make an accommodation to a qualified applicant with a known disability if it did not impose an undue hardship (Babbitt, 2004). An undue hardship was defined as changing the size, financial resources and the nature and structure of the operation (Babbitt, 2004). According to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ADA of 1990 discussed throughout this dissertation are the governing laws post-secondary institutions must abide by regarding accommodating students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Disability and education. In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This act, commonly known as Public Law 94-142, provided that any child with a disability was entitled to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in public school systems. Public Law 94-142 reflects the nation's commitment to educating all children, whether they have disabilities or not (Babbitt, 2004). Fundamentally, 94-142 and its successors (including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 and IDEA Improvement Act of 1997) said that public schools, with parental input and appropriate assessments, would determine what was most appropriate for a child's education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) enacted in 1975, required public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a FAPE in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. IDEA required public

school systems to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for each child (Babbitt, 2004; Chang, Conway, & Stodden, 2003). The specific special education and related services outlined in each IEP reflected the individualized needs of each student. IDEA also mandated that particular procedures be followed in the development of the IEP. Each student's IEP must be developed by a team of knowledgeable persons and must be at least reviewed annually. The team included the child's teacher, agency representative, parents, and if determined appropriate, the child (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2002). The IEP included a portion pertaining to transition services. The transition preparation in the IEP must have begun at age 14 and was updated annually. The IEP contained a statement of transition planning and any needed interagency responsibilities, placement courses, or a vocational education programs (Greenawalt & McAfee, 2001).

K-12 education. Any child who attended K-12 public schools had a legal entitlement to an education, regardless of a disability. In K-12 education, students are entitled to receive their education in the least restrictive environment (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005). K-12 public schools must make available special education and related services to all IDEA-eligible students with disabilities beginning at age three and through age eighteen. Services to nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one year old students are permissive based on individual school district board of trustees. Services K-12 students received included individualized instruction, assistive technology, and related services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and/or transition services based on individual needs (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005).

Post-secondary education. When a child turned 18 years old, they were considered to be adults, responsible for their own actions and decisions (Heyward, 1998). As students with disabilities leave secondary school and enter higher education, fundamental changes occurred with respect to their education (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005). In higher education, students had a civil right to have access to their education coupled with the notion that students were responsible for themselves (Heyward, 1998). A transition of responsibility from secondary education to post-secondary education took place. Unlike elementary and secondary schools, post-secondary education offered access rather than entitlement to academic programs (Heyward, 1998, Rothstein, 2003).

Modeled on section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ADA was primarily a civil rights law. The ADA prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, as long as the person is otherwise qualified. A student was considered to be qualified if the student met individual institutional academic and technical standards congruent with admissions or participation requirements (Heyward, 1998). Higher education must ensure access to all students who are otherwise qualified (Heyward, 1998). Access to post-secondary education and employment were closely linked to accommodations, services, technological, and instructional supports (Stodden et al., 2003).

Documentation needed for accommodations. The principles of IDEA, including the required IEP, no longer qualified as valid sources of documentation for accommodations at the post-secondary level unless the documentation was current and disability-specific (Hart, Whelley, & Zimbrich, 2002). Section 504 Plans, under which many students were served in high schools, were not valid for post-secondary accommodations (Hart et al., 2002). These accommodations often generated disputes between IDEA and ADA allocations of responsibilities for identifying and obtaining accommodations (Stodden et al., 2003). The ADA placed the burden of obtaining the proper documentation and requesting services directly on the person with disabilities rather than the school district or parents (Stodden et al., 2003). Thus, many IDEA-educated students had a difficult transition from the secondary system of IDEA to the post-secondary paradigm of ADA (Babbitt, 2004).

Transition issues. The U.S. Department of Education and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), have stressed the importance of improving transition services nationally since the mid 1980's (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), 2004). Transition language was included in both the IDEA of 1990 and again in IDEA Amendments of 1997. The 1990 IDEA broadened the scope of special education by adding a requirement that transition planning be incorporated into the IEP planning process. The transition component, to be developed no later than the student's 10th birthday, was designed to provide instruction and community experiences that led to post school outcomes in a variety of areas, including post-secondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community participation (Golden, Murphy, 2004; Destefano, Furney, & Hasazi, 1997). The IDEA

Amendment in 1997 required students with disabilities' access to general education curriculum and assessment systems. Further, the IDEA Amendment in 1997 expanded on previous transition requirements by requiring each student's IEP included, at age 14 or earlier, a statement of transition service needs focusing on the student's course of study including advanced-placement courses or vocational education programs (NCSET, 2004). The IEP also included, beginning at age 16 or younger, a statement of needed transition services and interagency responsibilities or needed linkages (NCSET, 2004).

Regulations were established requiring state and local education agencies to address transition service needs of students with disabilities (NCSET, 2004). These needs were to be met through coordinated planning among special education, teachers, community service agencies, parents, and students (NCSET, 2004). The IDEA required formal and systematic transition planning services for students with disabilities (NCSET, 2004). This planning was accomplished by local interagency transition teams who created an IEP for each eligible student. Specifically, IDEA required the sharing of transition programming responsibilities among special, vocational, and general educators, employment specialists, specialists in vocational rehabilitation, post-secondary education, social services, and mental health. Interagency coordination and alignment of services was a critical component in helping youth with disabilities make a successful transition to adult roles (NCSET, 2004). The rationale for establishing much of these provisions was based on the recognition that many young adults with disabilities were exiting high school unprepared for adult life (NCSET, 2004). Follow-up studies conducted during the past two decades of former special education student's documented unsatisfactory outcomes achieved by young adults with disabilities attempting post-secondary education

(NCSET, 2004). Predominant themes emerging from these studies included lower than desirable academic achievement levels, high dropout rates, unemployment, social isolation, and lowered participation in post-secondary education (NCSET, 2004).

Educational reform. Special education programs have been influenced by several federal education reforms, including but not limited to the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, Goals 2000, Educate America Act of 1994, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCSET, 2004). Further, in 2001 President Bush launched the New Freedom Initiative (NFI) in order to reduce barriers to full community integration for people with disabilities (Hart et al., 2002). K-12 entities in the United States faced a variety of accountability measures such as the No Child Left Behind Act, but post-secondary education remained basically untouched (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

Problem Statement

Gaps in service. There are genuine gaps in services. In some human service agencies, for instance, eligibility criteria was less stringent for children and adolescents than for adults, so individuals considered to have a disability while in secondary school may have been deemed ineligible for services and supports as adults (Hart et al., 2002). The question of adult eligibility contributed to delays in service provision for students still in high school. In addition, students with disabilities found a system in which no state or regional agency was responsible for tracking cross-system services or locating service gaps among agencies (Hart et al., 2002). The challenge was to integrate and align the transition requirements with other legislated requirements that gave students with disabilities access to the general education and assessment systems (NCSET, 2004).

Many states were found to be too slow in implementing transition services and failed to achieve minimum levels of compliance (NCSET, 2004).

Lack of collaboration. According to Kirst and Venezia (2001), the lack of connection between K-12 and higher education was rooted deeply in the history of U.S. education policy. As Kirst and Venezia (2004) phrased, problems associated with secondary and post-secondary connections, "causes of remediation, non-completion, and inadequate secondary preparation lied in part in the historical split between levels of our educational system and the subsequent lack of communication between them" (p. 2). The country's two separate systems of mass education, K-12 and post-secondary, rarely collaborated to establish consistent standards. Further, post-secondary institutions had little incentive to collaborate with K-12 districts and schools (Kirst & Venezia, 2001).

Once students graduated from high school, the IDEA no longer applied and the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA were the primary laws that govern the provision of disability assistance (Stodden et al., 2003). Assistance under these laws was based upon what was deemed reasonable and does not extend individuals' opportunities beyond those that were available to the average person. Students moving from secondary to post-secondary education or employment found themselves suddenly without the modes of assistance they were used to (Stodden et al., 2003). The contrast between the relatively high level of assistance provided under IDEA and much lower level of assistance provided in post-secondary environments posed many transition issues for individuals with disabilities (Stodden et al., 2003).

Lack of coordination. Historically, K-12 and higher education curricular changes have been isolated within either the secondary or the higher education sector.

Standards for defining college-level coursework and remedial courses, for example, were traditionally determined solely by higher education institutions, while K-12 entities defined the curricula for non-Advanced Placement college preparation courses in high schools (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). The lack of coordination between the public K-12 and post-secondary sectors impeded successful transitions between the systems and diminished educational opportunity for many students (Kirst & Venezia, 2001).

Barriers to transition. Numerous barriers to accessing a post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities were rooted in the differences between secondary and post-secondary school environments. The differences between secondary and post-secondary environments impeded the transition process (Stodden et al., 2003). Barriers to transition included (a) differences in instructional environments and legal mandates, (b) lack of alignment of supports and services, (c) differences in personal responsibility, and (d) a focuses on legality and cost rather than on individual needs and outcomes (Stodden et al., 2003).

Employment. According to the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) (2006), more than 60 percent of individuals with disabilities were unemployed. Compare this with data reported below in 2011 from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS), the number had increased 20 percent in the four years. This extremely high unemployment rate not only was detrimental to people with disabilities, but also to the overall economic and fiscal well-being of the nation (CCD, 2006). Research provided by Yelin and Katz (1994) indicated only 15.6 percent of persons with disabilities who had less than a high school diploma participated in the labor force. The rate doubled to 30.2 percent for individuals who had completed high school. The number tripled to 45.1 percent for those

with some post-secondary education, and climbed to 50.3 percent for persons with disabilities whom had at least four years of college (NCSET, 2004). Further research provided by the BLS (2011) suggested the unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities hovered at 80 percent. Home ownership rates were in the single digits. And Internet access for Americans with disabilities was half that of people without disabilities (Steinmetz, 2006).

Increase in accommodation requests. The ADA was enacted in 1991; the first generation of students with disabilities educated pursuant to the IDEA entered college. These students expected extensive accommodations and have no difficulty requesting them (Babbitt, 2004). Another contribution to the increasing number of accommodation requests was a much keener awareness of disabilities and a decrease in the stigma associated with them (Babbitt, 2004). According to the census data recorded in 2002 and released in 2006, 51.2 million people or 18.1 percent of the U.S. population had some level of disability (Steinmetz, 2006). The above data were within the research trends offered by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) (2012). The National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES) (2013) stated that during the survey period (2006-2007 school year) 11% of all United States college students reported some sort of disability.

These developments, along with others, combined to create larger numbers of students with disabilities on campus requesting accommodations. The increase in need for accommodation requests also generated issues for campus disability officers and legal counsel (Babbitt, 2004). ADA laws were clearer in 2004 than in 1996, conversely, issues that surfaced were more numerous, complex, and subtle than before (Babbitt, 2004).

Expenditures. According to the General Accounting Office (GAO), the growth in expenditures for special education had become an issue of national attention. On a national level, the proportion of federal support for special education had gained specific attention. In 2003, states received nearly $9 billion for assuring that over six million children and youth identified as having a disability received a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as required by IDEA (GAO, 2003). The federal share of special education costs was approximately twenty percent of the national average per pupil expenditure (OPI, 2012) This was a greater proportion of the national average per pupil expenditure than in the past, however, the proportion remained about one-half the 40 percent level promised by Congress when the special education laws were first passed in the mid 1970's (OPI, 2012).

Lack of student advocacy skills. Without the mandates of the IDEA, nothing similar to an individualized planning process existed in post-secondary educational settings (Stodden et al., 2003). Typically youth were expected to take the initiative to declare their status as a person with a disability, provide assessment data that would verify their specific disability, and then work with the disability support office to plan and participate in one or more of the accommodations or supports that might be available (Dorwick & Stodden, 2001). Further determination of the extent to which the accommodation might be implemented was negotiated between the student and the instructor (Stodden et al., 2003). Most youth with disabilities left the IEP process in secondary settings with a complete lack of awareness or understanding of their own disability and/or the assistance that identified the needs they might have in order to successfully function in the post-secondary arena (Stodden et al., 2003). In addition,

most youth with disabilities left the IEP process with few or no advocacy skills (Stodden et al., 2003). Given the lack of experience with disabilities among post-secondary instructional faculty and poor advocacy skills on the part of students, this process often required the student to have an understanding of the course content to be encountered and the range of teaching methods each instructor may use (Stodden et al., 2003).

Impact on students. Approximately, 3.2 million public high school students graduated in the United States in 2010 (BLS, 2011). Over 70 percent of these graduates continued to post-secondary education within two years of graduation, over half aspired to obtain a bachelor's degree. However, over 50 percent of students entering all post-secondary education institutions took remedial courses, many in several subject areas (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Kirst and Venezia (2004) continued to suggest that only 21 to 25 percent of students with disabilities ages 25-29 actually obtained a bachelor's degree. In short, the high aspirations of students with disabilities were not being realized as evidenced by intensive remediation and low completion rates (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). These aspirations were true in 2004 and according to data reported by OPI (2012) they were still true in 2012. While IDEA was straightforward in its intent to promote more meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities in standards and assessment, there were major concerns regarding the decisions that were made for individual students. According to Kirst and Venezia (2004), these concerns included (a) the burden placed on students with disabilities based on the high-stakes nature of testing, (b) how test results influenced graduation status, (c) to what extent special education programs were held accountable for student results, and (d) how valuable test results were for educational programming decisions if students with disabilities were excluded.

The impact of students with disabilities coming to higher educational settings without sufficient documentation not only affected their individual chances of success, but also affected the institutions' retention efforts (CCD, 2006). Institutions of higher education were not obligated to provide accommodations unless the individual with a disability made his or her needs known (Heyward, 1998). The obligation to act on a request from a student only surfaced when appropriate officials at the post-secondary institution had knowledge of the student's need. The knowledge must have been followed by a specific request for accommodations from the student (Heyward, 1998).

Once in college, it became the students' responsibility to self- identify as having a disability. College students were expected to initiate the request for accommodations and to provide acceptable documentation to post-secondary institutions. Students must also have been informed that older documentation of conditions such as learning disabilities may needed to be updated and that they were generally required to pay for the required additional documentation (Rothstein, 2003). Students were often required to take remedial-level courses in order to meet college academic standards. The costs associated with taking remedial-level courses were often absorbed by the students (Bracco & Kirst, 2005).

Policy reform. Students, parents, and secondary educators expressed confusion and frustration when discussing their understanding of college entrance and placement requirements and related state-level policies. Policy turmoil in secondary education was a primary cause of frustration. The current reforms, especially state assessments, were adding to already hectic environments in which college counseling and related activities too often fell by the wayside (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

Reforms such as the 1997 Amendment to IDEA where Congress required greater state and local accountability for improving graduation rates and post-secondary results for youth with disabilities added to secondary frustrations (GAO, 2003). Further, the Amendment to IDEA in 1997 directed state education agencies to include youth with disabilities in statewide achievement assessments, and to begin including a statement of the transition service needs in students' IEP at age 14, in addition to age 16 (GAO, 2003). Some states have also implemented exit examinations to ensure that all students have the necessary academic preparation to successfully pursue post-secondary education or employment. Students in these states needed to pass these exit examinations in order to obtain a diploma (GAO, 2003). The Department of Education monitored states' compliance with these requirements as well as provided technical assistance to enhance state and local capacity to improve graduation rates and the post-secondary employment and education status for youth with disabilities. State officials who utilized the data gathered by the Department of Education reported problems associated with gathering and using this data (GAO, 2003).

The evolution of the definition of handicap under Section 504 and the definition of disability under ADA made the accommodation process for institutions increasingly difficult (Hayward, 1998). Institutions took a haphazard approach of providing accommodations during the early development of the ADA. However, the increased pressures on the available resources as well as constrictions contrived from the legal definition of disability under the ADA made it necessary for institutions to develop increasingly sophisticated documentation procedures, which continued to contribute to ongoing legal issues (Hayward, 1998). For service providers, the increased attention

towards the accommodation procedure has been a double edge sword. In addition to bringing attention to the difficult work they were doing, increased attention towards the accommodation procedure also led to universal debate within universities (Heyward, 1998). For administrators, it became a wake-up call regarding new compliance mandates and issues; for students, it provided them with a substantial tool to ensure equal access and treatment (Heyward, 1998). Meanwhile faculty members found themselves having the structure and content of their courses being invaded by non-academics (Heyward, 1998).

Montana education. All of the issues mentioned previously were problems for the State of Montana. Adding to the already confusing and complex dynamics surrounding transition for students with disabilities, was the physical properties of Montana. The State of Montana was comprised of 422 public school districts that contained 141,807 students (OPI, 2011) spread throughout 147,046 total square miles. Montana's vast expansion consisted of 550 miles from its east to west boundaries and 320 miles from north to southern boundaries. With a sparse population of 6.2 persons per square mile it was difficult for students with disabilities to access qualified professionals capable of making recommendations for accommodations (OPI, 2008). In addition to poor access to qualified professionals able to perform the required individual assessments required for post-secondary accommodations, Montana did not have a coordinated system to collect post-secondary school outcome data (OPI, 2011). Further, OPI (2008) reported two-thirds of Montana high school districts were found to be non-compliant with the IDEA regulations on secondary transition. OPI (2011) reported the State of Montana was not required to collect secondary transition or post school outcome data since 2008.

However, the State of Montana did report deficiencies in graduation rates for students with disabilities (OPI, 2011).

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) has also been identified as a state-wide special education deficiency by OPI (2011) in the 2011 report to the Montana Legislature. AYP was measured in three grade levels that referenced reading and math scores, participation, and attendance, in addition to graduation rates (OPI, 2011).

According to Jim Marks (personal communication, January 27, 2012), there have been no comprehensive studies in the State of Montana that linked self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities and college freshmen Grade Point Average (GPA). Jim Marks was the Montana State Director of Vocational Rehabilitation at the Department of Public Health and Human Services and former Director of Disability Services at The University of Montana. Mr. Marks also served on many national committees regarding disabilities in education. Montana had few programs addressing transition and self-advocacy; however, they were mostly funded on one-time basis through the legislature and provided through Vocational Rehabilitation (Jim Marks, personal communication, January 27, 2012).

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was: What is the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester Grade Point Average (GPA)?

Purpose of the Study

This research analyzed the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA through a quantitative strategy. The purpose of this study was to discover if there were inadequacies in students with disabilities' preparation for

higher education as per acquiring the services or skills that were designed to promote self-advocacy as measured through college first semester GPA.

Importance of the Study

The overall guiding principle behind this research was the improvement of transition to post-secondary education for students with disabilities. The transition from secondary to post-secondary education contained discrepancies in what secondary institutions were required to provide for students with disabilities in regards to documentation material for disabilities accommodations and what was considered adequate documentation for accommodations in post-secondary education (Rothstein, 2003).

A reasonable starting point to improve the level of transition to higher education for students with disabilities was to improve disability leadership methodologies and policies within the State of Montana. Bennis and Slater (1999) claimed future leaders need to leave behind the old notions that leaders could be successful by acting in accordance to certain leadership principles. Further, the authors Bennis and Slater (1999) felt effective leaders contained three major attributes. First, effective leaders were willing to make decisions, but they allowed members to work as they see fit. Second, the authors felt leadership was not so much the exercise of power itself as the empowerment of others. Lastly, leaders must have been willing and able to set up reliable mechanisms of feedback (Bennis & Slater, 1999). Unless a leader understood his own actions, he may have been a carrier rather than a solver of problems (Bennis & Slater, 1999). This study was important to help the guidance of secondary and post-secondary leaders in disability education in making effective decisions, empowering students with disabilities

and the utilization of this study as a mechanism of feedback. Without an effective transition program from secondary to post-secondary education, students with disabilities continued to experience difficulties pursuing post-secondary education (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). Sharing the results of this research with individuals in leadership positions (both secondary and post-secondary), aided in the understanding of the importance of self-advocacy in effective transition practices.

Students with disabilities who pursued higher education found themselves in a transition from a reliance on systematic procedures to self-responsibility and advocacy. Many students with disabilities, parents, and secondary personnel may not have been aware of the stringent documentation requirements and self-reporting procedures in post-secondary educational institutions. A misunderstanding existed between what parents and students knew and what they needed to know in regards to transition requirements (Rothstein, 2003). The lack of consistent and well-communicated signals about what was required to enter and succeed in post-secondary institutions had an impact on student success (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

The authors Kirst and Venezia (2004) believed that there was a role for better state and regional policy alignment that created a more equitable policy environment, enabling more students to prepare for post-secondary education. Because over 80 percent of high school students aspireded to attend college and approximately 70 percent did attend some form of post-secondary educational program, it made sense to close the gap between secondary and post-secondary providing opportunities for all students to be prepared for college (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Approximately, 2.5 million public high school students graduated in the United States in the past consecutive years. Over 70

percent of those graduates continued to post-secondary education within two years of graduation. Over 50 percent of students who entered all post-secondary education institutions took remedial courses (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Only 21 to 25 percent of all students ages 25-29 actually obtained a bachelor's degree. In short, the high aspirations of students were not being realized as evidenced by intensive remediation and low completion rates (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

Disputes between students and institutions regarding disability issues, specifically documentation adequacies, were increasing (Rothstein, 2003). Although institutions of higher education almost always succeeded in these challenges, the continued activity suggested the need for communication to students and their parents about the difference between secondary and post-secondary education (Rothstein, 2003).

Topic's Link to Leadership

The overall guiding principal behind this research was the improvement of transition to higher education for students with disabilities. The high number of individuals with disabilities being unemployed effected institutional retention efforts, individual students, and the overall fiscal well-being of the nation (CCD, 2006). In 2011 the unemployment rate for persons with less than a high school diploma was approximately 14.5 percent. The unemployment rate for some level of post-secondary education was 8 percent and only 4 percent for individuals with at least a bachelor's degree (BLS, 2012). Further, data supported the correlation between increased education and higher salaries (BLS, 2012). Appendix B displayed the correlation between increased education and salaries. Even further, BLS (2012) made references to education as a means to provide individuals a position in a field of choice and satisfaction.

This study was built on, and added to, the field of transition research and education. Leaders in both secondary and post-secondary education may be able to use the outcomes of this study for specific transition practices to assist students transitioning into post-secondary education. Specifically, educational leaders may use the outcomes of this study to aid education professionals, disabilities services, parents, and successful education pursuits for students with disabilities. The results of this research demonstrated a link between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA's. Leaders involved with assisting students with disabilities making the transition into post-secondary options may have utilized the results of this research to provide skills and services necessary for successful student achievement and retention.

Chapter One Summary

Students, parents and secondary educators expressed confusion and frustration when discussing their understanding of college entrance and placement requirements and related state-level policies. Policy turmoil in secondary education was a primary cause of frustration (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Previous research indicated there were gaps in services (Hart et al., 2002) Individuals considered to have a disability while in secondary school may have been deemed ineligible for services and supports as adults (Hart et al., 2002). Further, many states have been found to be too slow in implementing transition services and have failed to achieve minimum levels of compliance (NCSET, 2004, OPI, 2011). Secondary and post-secondary institutions rarely collaborated to establish consistent standards (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). The contrast between the relatively high level of assistance provided under IDEA and much lower level of assistance provided in post-secondary environments posed many transition issues for individuals with

disabilities (Stodden et al., 2003). The lack of coordination between the public K-12 and post-secondary sectors impeded successful transitions between the systems and diminished educational opportunity for many students (Kirst & Venezia, 2001).

According to the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) (2006), more than 60 percent of individuals with disabilities were unemployed. This extremely high unemployment rate was not only detrimental to people with disabilities, but also to the overall economic and fiscal well-being of the nation (CCD, 2006).

Most youth with disabilities left the IEP process with few or no advocacy skills (Stodden et al., 2003). Without the mandates of the IDEA, nothing similar to an individualized planning process existed in post-secondary educational settings (Stodden et al., 2003). In short, the high aspirations of students were not being realized as evidenced by intensive remediation and low completion rates. The impact of students with disabilities going to higher educational settings without sufficient documentation, not only affected their individual chances of success, but also effected the institutions' retention efforts (CCD, 2006). Students had to be informed that older documentation needed to be updated and in addition, they were generally required to pay for the required additional documentation (Rothstein, 2003). Further, students were often required to take remedial-level courses in order to meet college academic standards. The costs associated with taking remedial-level courses were often absorbed by the students (Bracco & Kirst, 2005).

The problem with the many transition issues faced by students wanting to enter the post-secondary arena affected society in multiple ways. According to the CCD (2006), the high number of disabled individuals being unemployed affected institutional

retention efforts, the individual student, and the overall fiscal well-being of the nation. With over 50 million people in the U.S. reported some sort of reported disability, and approximately 80 percent of the 50 million did not participate in the work force, the opportunity for increased national economic stability was potentially lost. Educational statistics reported by OPI (2012) as well as Kirst and Venezia (2004); supported the importance of some level of post-secondary education for increased national employment rates. The BLS (2012) further emphasized the importance of education by offering educational attainment and unemployment data compiled in 2011. In 2011 the unemployment rate for persons with less than a high school diploma was approximately 14.5 percent. The unemployment rate for some level of post-secondary education was 8 percent and only 4 percent for individuals with at least a bachelor's degree (BLS, 2012). Further, data supported the correlation between increased education and higher salaries (BLS, 2012).

Limitations

Methodological confines affected the outcome of this study. The small number of response rates limited generalizability. The volunteer sample size used in this study spoke to the difficulty of reaching participants with disabilities in the post-secondary education setting. Individuals with disabilities were not required to report their disability or register with disability services and often times preferred not to register. Unlike the secondary setting, in the post-secondary educational arena, if students with disabilities wished to receive any sort of accommodation for their disability, they were required to report and register with disability services. Participants self-identified as having an IEP in high school volunteered information for this research in order to study the

phenomenon of linking self-advocacy skills and college freshmen GPA, participants who experienced this phenomenon needed to be voluntarily selected for the research process. (Creswell, 2003). This research utilized participants who self-identified to have a disability under ADA definitions, were at the age of 18 or older, and self-reported as having an IEP for at least two years while in high school. Research did not include participants qualifying for Section 504, IEP's only. This volunteer selection process may have limited the results for individuals diagnosed with a disability later in their academic career. These students while not on IEP's in the high school setting may have had valuable information regarding their transition experience. The survey responses totaled 52 respondents, however, only 17 participants reported being on an IEP in high school. Respondents volunteered all information used for data analysis. Participants were not obligated to report disabilities to post-secondary institutions unless they sought accommodations (Office for Civil Rights, 2007).

This research was conducted at a distance from where the participants were sampled. Survey Monkey was utilized and limited the researchers' ability to interact individually with the participants to clarify survey items and answer questions. Further, the survey questions and responses were distributed and collected in an on-line format. This format may have limited the number of responses due to the ability of students' to access technology and e-mail. In addition, there were physical and cognitive conditions that could limit one's ability to read and complete on-line surveys. These conditions may have affected the number of students able to complete the on-line surveys and may have inhibited the ability of some students with multiple disabilities to participate. Lastly, this research utilized the already established and valid Student Advocacy Questionnaire

(SAQ). The SAQ was geared toward students with learning disabilities. Participants with physical or other disabilities aside from learning disabilities may have not seen the relevance to their own situation and this could have presented another result of a low volunteer sample size.

The survey was distributed twice due to one survey question being neglected to be placed into the initial survey. The gate keepers were again contacted and explanations surrounding the oversight were made. The gate keepers distributed the survey for the second time and the researcher's mistake actually resulted in an increase in the number of survey participants.

Delimitations

For the purpose of this study only self-identified students were used. Students self-identified as having an IEP while in secondary education were only used. Students with disabilities who self-identified as being over the age of 18 were used. Students self-identified their freshmen first semester GPA.

Definitions

Acceptable Documentation. An applicant to a post-secondary institution may always voluntarily disclose a disability and ask that it be considered in the admissions determination. Further, once accepted, a student who wishes to receive accommodations or adjustments for his or her disability will have to identify the disability. In either situation the educational institution may require documentation of the disability. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide such documentation at his or her own expense. The documentation must be no more than three years old, come from an appropriate expert and be sufficiently comprehensive (Babbitt, 2004).

Accommodations. Providing effective auxiliary aids and services for qualified students with documented disabilities if such aids are needed to provide equitable access to the University's programs and services. This included academic programs as well as extracurricular activities. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005)

Advocacy Skills. An individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involved making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (Boyer-Stephens, Corbey, Jones, West, 1999). Further analysis of advocacy skills was provided by Dorwick and Stodden (2001) and Stodden et al., (2003). The authors felt self-advocacy skills included: (a) students taking the initiative to declare their status as a person with disabilities, (b) provide assessment data verifying their specific disability and how to accommodate it, (c) work with support services to plan accommodations.

Appropriate Expert. Learning disability specialist, educational psychologist, or clinical psychologist (Babbitt, 2004).

Appropriate Services. Included, but was not limited to counseling services, writing or math labs, study skills or time management classes (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). Part of the process for determining the right match for a student and a college was learning about the services and supports available on campus and the process for obtaining these supports (Getzel & Wehman, 2005).

Auxiliary Aids and Services. (a) qualified interpreters or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments; (b) qualified readers, taped texts, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments, (c) acquisition or modification

of equipment or devices; and (d) other similar services and actions. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008)

Closed-ended questions. Questions where participants were asked to select an answer from a list provided by the researcher in a survey format (Babbie, 2006).

Disability. Federal law defined a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits or restricted the conditions, manner, or duration under which an average person in the general population could perform a major life activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, or taking care of oneself. An impairment or diagnosis, in and of itself, did not constitute a disability: it must "substantially limit" activities of daily living (Babbitt, 2004). In order to establish a case of discrimination under the ADA and section 504 the individual must first have proved that s/he had a disability. Under both statutes, and individual with a disability was defined as "any person who a) had a physical or mental impairment which substantially limited one or more of such person's major life activities, b) had a record of such impairment, or c) was regarded as having such an impairment." (42 U.S.C. Section 12101 et seq. and 29 U.S.C. Section 701 et seq.)

Documentation of Disability. An applicant to a post-secondary institution may always voluntarily disclose a disability and ask that it be considered in the admissions determination. Further, once accepted, a student who wishes to receive accommodations or adjustments for his or her disability will have to identify the disability. In either situation the educational institution may require documentation of the disability. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide such documentation at his or her own expense. The documentation must be fairly recent (no more than three years old), must come from

an appropriate expert (Learning disability specialist, educational psychologist, or clinical psychologist), and must be sufficiently comprehensive (Documentation should identify testing mechanisms and procedures, explain what the applicant was tested for, describe how the abilities of the applicant relate to the specific program and describe how to compensate for the applicant's differences). (Babbitt, 2004)

Federally Subsidized Institution. Any institution receiving federal funding

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The Montana Constitution-Article X stated three areas pertaining to education, they read as follows:

1) It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.
2) The state recognizes the distinct unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.
3) The legislature shall provide a system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools. The legislature may provide such other educational institutions, public libraries, and educational programs as it deems desirable. It shall fund and distribute in an equitable manner to the school districts the state's share of the costs of the basic elementary and secondary school system.

Individual with a disability was a person who: (a) had a physical or mental impairment that substantially limited one or more major life activities; (b) had a record of

such impairment; or (c) was regarded as having such an impairment. A qualified employee or applicant with a disability was an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, could perform the essential functions of the job in question. Reasonable accommodation included, but was not limited to: (a) Making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. (b) Job restructuring, modifying work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position; (c) acquiring or modifying equipment or devices, adjusting modifying examinations, training materials, or policies, and providing qualified readers or interpreters (www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-ada.html).

Interview. A data-collection encounter in which an interviewer asks questions of a respondent. Interviews may be conducted face-to-face or by telephone (Babbie, 2006).

Least Restrictive Environment. Students with disabilities aged three through 21, were educated in a regular educational setting with children who are not disabled (IDEA, 2000).

Local Funds. Educational expenditures from district revenues other than state and Federal funds (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005).

Major Life Activities. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014).

Major Bodily Functions. Operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014).

Multiple Regression Analysis. A form of statistical analysis that sought the equation representing the impact of two or more independent variables on a single dependent variable (Babbie, 2007).

Qualified Professional. Certified/licensed school or other psychologist, learning disability specialist, speech and language pathologist, or psychiatrist (www.umt.edu). Learning disability specialist, educational psychologist, or clinical psychologist (NACUA pg 331, 2004)

Qualified Status (otherwise qualified). An individual who met the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation (Heyward, 1998). A student's academic proficiency and ability to demonstrate learning (Marks, 2006).

Quality Education. In an attempt to define quality education pursuant to Sherlock's findings, the Legislature adopted SB152. SB152 defined quality education elements as: a) the educational program specified by the accreditation standards as provided for in 20-7-111, b) educational programs provided for students with special needs, c) development of curricula integrated to American Indian education, d) the need for qualified and effective teachers, administrators and staff, e) facilities and distance learning technologies associated with meeting accreditation standards, f) transportation of students, g) procedures to assess and track student achievement, h) preservation of local control (SB152 by Ryan, 2005).

Reasonable Accommodation. An accommodation was not reasonable if it would constitute an undue burden or hardship to provide it, or if it would have required a fundamental alteration to the institution's program (Babbitt pg. 334, 2004).

Remedial Courses. Classes prerequisite to courses needed for program, typically not counted towards program credit requirements.

Self-advocacy. An individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involved making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (Boyer-Stephens, Corbey, Jones, West, 1999). Further analysis of advocacy skills was provided by Dorwick and Stodden (2001) and Stodden et al., (2003). The authors felt self-advocacy skills included: (a) students who took the initiative to declare their status as a person with disabilities, (b) provided assessment data verifying their specific disability and how to accommodate it, (c) worked with support services to plan accommodations.

Substantially Limit. Impairment must prevent or severely restrict an individual from doing activities that are of central importance to most people's daily lives (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014).

Sufficiently Comprehensive Documentation. Documentation that identified testing mechanisms and procedures, explained what the applicant was tested for, described how the abilities of the applicant related to the specific program and described how to compensate for the applicant's differences (Babbitt, 2004).

Survey instruments. A document consisting of questions and other items designed to solicit information used for analysis (Babbie, 2007).

Timely manner. For the purpose of this research, timely manner in the Research Question, meant receiving post-school services, supports or programs before the student exited the school system (O'Leary, Storms, & Williams, 2002).

Transition Services. A coordinated set of activities for youth with disabilities that promoted movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Transition services were based on the individual needs of the student taking into account the students' preferences and interests and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment, and other post-school living objectives and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (Hindlin, 2006; O'Leary, Storms, & Williams, 2002).

Undue hardship. Undue hardship meant significant difficulty or expense and focuses on the resources and circumstances of the particular employer in relationship to the cost or difficulty of providing a specific accommodation (Babbitt, 2004; U.S. Department of Justice, 2008).

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Individuals considered to have a disability in the secondary setting may be deemed ineligible for services as adults. Secondary and post-secondary education systems rarely collaborated to establish consistent standards of disability transition (Kirst &Venezia, 2001). Little has changed in nature and structure of disability transition from secondary to post-secondary education. In fact, the State of Montana was not even required to track secondary transition or post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities as part of the State Performance Plan (OPI, 2011). These issues coupled with increased accommodation requests at post-secondary institutions and limited student advocacy skills, impacted students with disabilities' chances of success and institutional retention efforts (CCD, 2006). High schools that provided transition services to assist young adults with disabilities laid a strong foundation to maximize their adjustment into the adult community (Siira, 2005). This research analyzed the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshmen GPA.

Historical Review of Disability Laws and Litigation

The ADA was initially heralded as the most significant piece of civil rights legislation in more than 20 years and was viewed as the act that was to do for individuals with disabilities what Title VI and VII accomplished for minorities (Heyward, 1998). Section 504 of the ADA and its implementing regulations, which the overwhelming majority of institutions have been responsible for complying with since the 1970's, was the most cogent federal statute regarding the specific obligations of post-secondary institutions (Heyward, 1998). In spite of over 30 years of judicial and federal agency

interpretation, the issues facing colleges and universities with respect to students with disabilities became increasingly complex (Rothstein, 2003).

Annual reports to congress. Since the 1975 passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the Department of Education (DOE) collected data on the number of children served under the law. The data collected by DOE was submitted to Congress and the general public annually. During the almost three decades that the annual reports to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) had been published, these documents undergone several minor stylistic changes and one major substantive redesign and refocus (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007). In 1997, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) adopted a policy-oriented approach to the annual report to Congress. The result of this shift was first seen in the 1998 annual report, which used a four-section modular format. The subsequent reports were redesigned to focus on results and accountability. The purpose behind the redesign was to make the report more useful to Congress, parents, states, and stakeholders (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007).

Individuals with disabilities education act of 1990, Public Law 101-476 (IDEA, 1990). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was broken down into two main parts, Part B and Part C, with sections under each main part. Part C contained material focused on serving infants and toddlers. IDEA Part B served children ages three through five and students ages six through 21 (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007). Early collections of data on the number of children with disabilities served under Part B of IDEA used nine disability categories. Through the subsequent years and multiple reauthorizations of the act, the disability categories have been expanded to 13,

and revised and new data collections have been required (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007). In 1997, the law was reauthorized with several major revisions. One revision was the requirement that race/ethnicity data be collected on the number of children served. The reauthorization also allowed states the option of reporting children ages 6 through 9 under the developmental delay category (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007). In Appendix C, the 26th Annual Report to Congress (2007) provided trends in the numbers and percentages of students ages six through 21 served under IDEA Part B.

According to IDEA, 1990, transition services were a coordinated set of activities, designed within an outcome orientated process that promoted movement from school to post school activities (IDEA, 1990). IDEA mandated transition planning for students aged 16 older with disabilities. According to IDEA (1990), the transition plans included interagency collaboration between school systems and the agencies providing disability services and financing for students once leaving high school (Siira, 2005). School systems were required to invite parents and students to the annual IEP meetings and utilize their input for planning of services (GAO, 2003). School systems were required to have a statement of transition services included in the IEP prior to the student turning 16 (GAO, 2003; Siira, 2005).

Americans with disabilities act of 1990, Public Law 101-336. Modeled on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was primarily a civil rights law. The initial ADA enacted in 1990 was replaced by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (Department of Justice, 2009). The ADA Amendments Act of 2008, aside from clearer wording, basic contents stayed the same

(Department of Justice, 2009). The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 rearranged wording in the ADA of 1990 then was published in the United States Code. The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 became effective on January 1, 2009 (Department of Justice, 2009).

The ADA prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, as long as the person was otherwise qualified (Stodden et al., 2003). If a student met individual institutional academic and technical standards congruent with admissions or participation requirements, the student was considered to be otherwise qualified (Heyward, 1998). Higher education ensured access to all students who were otherwise qualified (Heyward, 1998). Access to post-secondary education and employment were closely linked to accommodations, services, technological and instructional supports (Stodden et al., 2003). ADA meant access to information and to technology as well as physical access; therefore, universities also made reasonable accommodations for a student's disability, in order that they may be able to demonstrate their ability. However, civil rights laws and the reasonable accommodations they called for were in no way intended, nor were they able to, guarantee success. At most, a student could expect an equal chance to do the same work as their peers (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Federal regulations pertaining to Section 504 in public schools and virtually any other area of public life took somewhat different approaches. Section 504 in public schools was closely aligned with IDEA requirements found in federal regulations. Again, this was a reflection of differing attitudes and expectations directed toward school-aged children as opposed to adults (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

The University of Montana Disability Services for Students' website offered a comprehensive point-by-point comparison of secondary and post-secondary education in regards to accommodations. Comparisons between entitlement in secondary education and access in post-secondary education were drawn. Emphasis was given to students being entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in secondary education and access, not entitlement, in post-secondary education. Section 504 in secondary education included FAPE language; therefore accommodations included a variety of assignment alterations. Conversely, in post-secondary education, accommodations must not have impeded on the instructional integrity of the course being instructed (Heyward, 1998). Further, subjects in secondary education may be waived for a student prior to graduation, conversely, in most post-secondary education institutions; waivers were never granted and substitutions were implemented only after a rigorous petition processes depending on each individual case (Heyward, 1998).

In short, students were qualified for accommodations in secondary education by being the proper age and because they had a disability, the student must have met otherwise qualified requirements for post-secondary education (Heyward, 1998). As youth with disabilities transitioned from secondary to post-secondary education, they were impacted by movement from the guidance of the IDEA to Section 504 of the ADA (Stodden, et al., 2003). A full guide of comparisons exists in appendix A.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990, Public Law 105-332. The Carl Perkins legislation was intended to provide effective outcome-based transition services for students with disabilities and to reduce barriers in providing better services through better interagency collaboration (Siira, 2005). This legislation

guaranteed equal access to vocational educational programs and opportunities for all students. Further, the act was to develop more fully the academic, vocational and technical skills of secondary and post-secondary students who enrolled in vocational programs (Carl D. Perkins Vocational & Applied Technology Education Act, 1998)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, PL 105-17 (IDEA 1997). Edmondson and Cain (2002) provided research data that confirmed students with disabilities had less successful outcomes than their peers without disabilities. The transition portion of IDEA 1997 was to provide children with disabilities the services they needed to prepare for successful employment and independent living. Further, instead of being excluded from testing data, students with disabilities in secondary education were expected to be included in all state and district-wide assessments (Siira, 2005). Standardized testing was utilized to provide documentation on students' progress with disabilities in relation to students without disabilities. Students with disabilities were allowed appropriate accommodations in test administration (Siira, 2005). IDEA 1997 also mandated that, beginning no later than age 14, students participated in their annual IEP, and begun to plan for transition from high school. In addition, schools were required to invite to the IEP meetings any agency that would be responsible for providing or paying for transition services (NCSET, 2007). IDEA 1997 required by the age of 16, a students' IEP included a statement of needed transition services, including interagency responsibilities, when appropriate. The agencies would then provide a statement of their responsibilities. The law ensured agencies provide the services for which they said they would be responsible for (NCSET, 2007). The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) was authorized to provide

guidance to the State Education Agencies on implementing and monitoring IDEA 1997 (IDEA 1997, Transition Requirements, 2000).

Workforce investment act of 1998, Public Law 105-220. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was designed to promote partnerships among the available agencies in the preparation and support of eligible clients for transition to employment or post-secondary education (Siira, 2005). The WIA consisted of several provisions: (a) training and employment programs based at the local level, (b) convenient access to educational and training programs, (c) monitoring success of the training (d) clients are to have a choice that reflect interest, (e) services are to be provided in a single, local One-Stop delivery method (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

No Child Left Behind Act. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was a reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, enacted in 1965 (Hindlin, 2006). The overarching goals and intent of NCLB included: (a) all students, at a minimum, attain proficiency in reading and math by 2013-2014; (b) all Limited English Proficient students become proficient in the English language; (c) instructional personnel in all classrooms are highly qualified; (d) all students graduate from high school; and (e) learning environments were safe, drug-free and conducive to learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The implementation of the NCLB initiated in 2001 amplified the importance of accountability and results in the Annual Report to Congress (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007). The NCLB of 2001 mandated that each state implemented a statewide accountability system for all public schools and their students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). According to the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education this emphasis on accountability meant that Congress and

the public received assurance that federal funds were well spent (27th Annual Report to Congress, 2007).

Under NCLB, all school districts were required to give the public timely, easy to read reports on the performance of each school and school district (National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) (2008). In order to meet NCLB requirements the report contained: "(a) student achievement data for each school, (b) student achievement data for each subgroup within the school (size established by the state), (c) Information about the professional qualifications of the teachers, (d) performance information of each child on state assessments required by NCLB (the results included where the student should be in accordance to grade level of a typical student the same age), (e) assessments reported to parents in writing along with an explanation of what the test results mean" (National Center on Learning Disabilities (NCLD), 2008).

Individuals with disabilities education act of 2004. The reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 was signed into law on December 3, 2004 and took effect on July 1, 2005. IDEA 2004 aligned closely to NCLB, intending to ensure equity, accountability, and excellence in education for children with disabilities. IDEA 2004 modified the purpose section of IDEA 1997 to clarify the purpose of IDEA included not only preparing children with disabilities for employment and independent living, but also preparation for further education (Hindlin, 2006). Further changes included language of the purpose to ensure educators and parents had the necessary resources to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The definitions of highly qualified teachers and core academic subjects were new in IDEA 2004 and paralleled the language of NCLB (Hindlin, 2006).

Individuals with disabilities education act of 2007. The most recent modifications to IDEA took effect on May 9, 2007. The reauthorization in 2007 provided additional flexibility to states to more appropriately measure the achievement of certain students with disabilities. The regulations allowed individual states to develop modified academic achievement standards that were challenging for eligible students and measured a student's mastery of grade-level content, but were less difficult than grade-level achievement standards (Department of Education, 2007). The modified standards were implemented as part of the accountability and assessment systems aligning with NCLB (Department of Education, 2007). The final regulations made clear that modified academic achievement standards were challenging for eligible students, but were a less rigorous expectation of mastery of grade-level academic content standards. A State's academic content standards were not what was modified. The expectations for whether a student had mastered those standards, however, may have been less difficult than grade-level academic achievement standards. The new regulations were part of an ongoing effort that ensured all students, including those with disabilities, fully participated in state's accountability systems and were assessed in an appropriate and accurate manner (Department of Education, 2007).

College opportunity and affordability act (2008). On February 7, 2008 the College Opportunity and Affordability Act passed into law with a vote of 354-58. The new bill addressed the soaring price of college tuition and removed obstacles that made it harder for students to attend college (Committee on Education and Labor, 2008). Further, the new bill attempted to ensure equal college opportunities for students with disabilities by establishing a national center containing support services and best practices for

colleges, students with disabilities and their families (Committee on Education and Labor, 2008). The College Opportunity and Affordability Act also assisted colleges to recruit, retain, and graduate students with disabilities and improved materials and facilities. Lastly, the bill expanded eligibility criteria for Pell Grant scholarships and other need-based aid for students with intellectual disabilities (Committee on Education and Labor, 2008).

American recovery and reinvestment act (2009). President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) into law on February 17, 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The largest portion of the first ARRA grants was delivered through the State's iscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF). According to ARRA (2009), providing a high-quality education for all children was critical to America's economic future. ARRA continued to say, America's economic competitiveness depended on providing all children an education enabling them success in a global economy that was predicated on knowledge and innovation (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). ARRA (2009) provided funding summaries which reported $12.2 billion dollars had been distributed annually to IDEA as of September 2009. According to ARRA (2009), $35.4 billion had been distributed to the State's Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The State's Fiscal Stabilization Fund distribution had been dedicated to restoring state supports for public elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) Montana did not receive any ARRA funding in FY 09 for either K-12 or post-secondary education. Montana was slated to receive approximately $25 million dollars in FY 2010 for K-12 and $29 million dollars for post-secondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The primary focus of the ARRA grants was to provide fiscal relief to save and create education jobs and advance educational reforms (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). ARRA was also intended to add critical funding to existing formula grant programs including Title I and IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The ARRA funding was intended to support the personnel necessary to sustain and expand essential programs for low-income students and students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Education did not provide a definition of success or essential programs. Further, the report did not provide details on how it intended to expand essential programs. The report relied heavily on media reports and anecdotal accounts to the U.S. Department of Education for reporting statistics. According to OPI (2011), in FY 2009, $31 million dollars of the $116.6 million dollars Montana spent on special education came from federal money. This was still only 27 percent of the 40 percent level Congress promised when the special education laws were first passed in the mid-1970s (OPI, 2011).

Disability Law. Heyward (1998) offered several court cases in regards to the question of whether students have fulfilled their responsibilities with respect to identifying their disabilities needs. According to Heyward, making a specific request and providing adequate documentation could be very difficult. From prior court decisions Heyward (1998) made the following suggestions for institutions to implement policies and procedures addressing documentation provisions: (a) institution needed to clarify what constituted an appropriate request by a student (b) protocol for considering factors in assessing the sufficiency of the documentation provided, was it adequate and what was

adequate (c) what control the institution exercised over the documentation process (d) procedures followed when challenging the opinions and recommendations of experts, and (e) responsibilities of each stakeholder in the accommodation process (Heyward, 1998).

Typically a menu of available, possible accommodations and supports was used for discussion between the student, faculty and disability services. The scope and depth of this menu was impacted by the extent of interest in supporting persons with disabilities at each institution and the amount of funding available for such services (Stodden et al., 2003).

Section 504 did not require institutions to provide such academic adjustments or accommodations if they were not requested by the student (Heyward, 1998). Heyward (1998) offered further review of several court cases regarding examples of notifications and requests that were found to be inadequate (a) student mentioning he or she possessed a disability or providing evidence of a disability and not making a specific request for accommodations. This included making notation of a disability in admissions material, interview, and/or informing an advisor or faculty member (b) student insistence of existence of a disability and requesting specific accommodations and refusing to provide adequate documentation establishing the existence of the disability and the appropriateness of the accommodation (c) requesting information regarding disability services and services available, without identifying a personal need or making a request for accommodations (d) student discussing a disability or accommodation needs with several post-secondary personnel, however not producing adequate documentation or making a request to a responsible, institution official (e) student failure to adhere to established procedures for making requests and providing adequate documentation,

including requesting and providing documentation in a timely manner (f) student failure to inform the institution that additional accommodations were needed, and (g) student found they were academically slipping, tried to be retroactive in acquiring accommodations (Heyward, 1998).

Disabilities Defined. Since the 1975 passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act the Department of Education collected data on the number of children served under the law. Early collections of data on the number of children with disabilities served under Part B of IDEA used nine disability categories. Through the subsequent years and multiple reauthorizations of the act, the disability categories have been expanded to 13 (The 26th Report to Congress, 2007). The 26th Report to Congress (2007) listed the thirteen disability categories as: (a) visual impairments, (b) hearing impairments, other health impairments,(c) speech and language impairments,(d) traumatic brain injury, (e) orthopedic impairments, (f) specific learning disabilities, (g) deaf-blindness,(h) multiple disabilities, (i) autism, (j) emotional disturbance, (k) mental retardation, and (l) other disabilities.

In order to establish a case of discrimination under the ADA and Section 504, the individual first proved that they had a disability (Heyward, 1998). Under both statutes, an individual with a disability was defined as any person who: (a) had a physical or mental impairment which substantially limited one or more of such person's major life activities (b) had a record of such impairment, or (c) was regarded as having such an impairment (Getzel & Wehman, 2005; Heyward, 1998).

Research Related to Self-Advocacy

> Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help and friendship, and learning about self-determination. (Wrightslaw, 2012, para.1)

One of the major developments in the study of post-secondary transition was the conceptualization, program development, implementation and assessment of self-determination (Trainor, 2002). Bassett and Lehmann (2002) proposed in their research that communication, metacognition, and goal identification were three skills students with disabilities should develop in order to improve their self-advocacy skills. Bassett and Lehmann (1999) further explored high school students' participation in transition related activities in their qualitative study. The findings indicated that students, teachers and parents did not perceive formal transition-related processes as occurring at school or home. Conclusions drawn from the research are: (a) limited resources and confusion about roles therefore limiting transition procedures, (b) transition meetings are important for inspiring student involvement and (c) student involvement would require changes in teacher, students and parent roles (Bassett & Lehmann, 1999).

One of the critical components in becoming more self-determined was the development of self-advocacy skills (Wehmeyer, 2002). Self-advocacy often conjured up misconceptions of individuals who were aggressive and overbearing and unreasonable. In actuality, self-advocacy was an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey,

negotiate or assert interests, desires, needs, and rights. Self-advocacy involved making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (Wehmeyer, 2002). Students who learned to self-advocate developed self-esteem and were more willing to risk failure at an activity (e.g., attempting to master a difficult academic skill, increasing social activity) (Wehmeyer, 2002). Not only did the acquisition of self-advocacy skills improve the chances of the student being successful in an educational program, it provided critical practice in the development of those skills necessary for independence and success after exiting the program (Wehmeyer, 2002). When staff actively engaged the student with a mental health disability in the process of learning about advocacy and self-determination, the responsibility of personal management and self-promotion began to shift from the staff to the student (Wehmeyer, 2002). Wehmeyer (2002) offered a side by side comparison of self-determination and self-advocacy synthesized in the following table.

Table 1. Comparison of self-determination and self-advocacy

Self-Determination vs. Self-Advocacy	
Self-Determination	Self-Advocacy
The ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself. Based on the concepts of goal setting, planning, and acquiring skills/knowledge.	Identifying what you need and being able to act to get or achieve it. Based on the concept of fairness not want.
Self-determined people know what they want and use their self-advocacy skills to get it.	

A review of the literature surrounding self-advocacy and students with disabilities produced research related to models of self-regulated learning and self-determination. The theory of metacognition surfaced from several sources. Metacognition has been defined as the ability of the student to analyze, reflect on and understand personal, cognitive and learning processes (Kosine, 2006). Yet another definition of metacognition within the research defined metacognition as having two components, knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition (Kosine, 2006; Noonan, 2004). In short, the concept, knowledge of cognition, referred to a person's ability to appraise knowledge or ability. The second construct of metacognition, regulation of cognition, referred to several secondary processes that aided in one's control of learning. The research identified three skills associated with regulation of cognition: planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Kosine, 2006; Noonan, 2004). All the research indicated similar conclusions that a learner who did not possess self-appraisal (or metacognition) skills, approached a task without much consideration and employed strategies that were not conductive to a successful outcome (Kosine, 2006).

According to Kosine (2006) a connection between metacognition and self-advocacy was established. Research indicated that metacognition played an important role in self-advocacy behaviors, the development of self-determination, and the ability to successfully cope with learning strategies (Bursuk, Durlack, & Rose, 1994; Layton & Lock, 2003). The absence of metacognition of one's learning characteristics led to academic struggles and feelings of frustration and disappointment (Kosine, 2006).

Kosine (2006) performed research measuring self-advocacy behaviors by assessing three areas. The three areas consisted of self-determination, confidence and

help seeking behaviors. Kosine (2006) developed a Self-Advocacy Questionnaire for this study in order to measure self-advocacy. Further, Kosine (2006) utilized the Metacognitive Assessment Inventory (MAI) developed by Dennison and Schraw (1994). The MAI was a comprehensive instrument used to measure eight categories of metacognition.

Further research surrounding self-advocacy revealed a study that was conducted in 1999. The Career and Self-Advocacy Program (CASAP) was launched under the U.S. Department of Education. It was designed to work with middle and high schools help facilitate and improve the self-determination skills of youths (ages 14-22) with disabilities as well as provide a program for teachers to utilize in the classroom. The CASAP was a self-determination curriculum designed to assist adolescents with mild to moderate disabilities who were planning on attending post-secondary education or training after graduation. The CASAP was further designed to allow students to relate post-secondary education or training to specific career choices. It also explored certain self-advocacy topics and how these topics relate to the secondary experience and specifically the IEP process and setting goals. The CASAP was designed surrounding the following basic units: (a) self-awareness and advocacy, (b) post-secondary options, and (c) goal setting and IEP's.

The CASAP program was initially launched to help increase the self-determining skills of students with mild to moderate disabilities. It was implemented within various school settings and as a three-week summer program since its conception. Each unit expanded off the previous unit's ideas and concepts. The purpose of the first unit, post-secondary options, was to get students thinking about all options after high school.

Within this unit the students researched career interests, labor markets and post-secondary institutions. Topics included: adult training and educational opportunities, criteria for post-secondary admission, application processes, money sources, student support services and preparation for post-secondary education. The second unit, self-awareness and advocacy, surrounded students' communication of individual interests, needs and rights. Topics included: the importance of self-advocacy, self-awareness and disability knowledge, disability and civil rights law, ability and need awareness, communication skills, and personal responsibilities concerning advocacy. The final unit, goal setting and IEP's, helped educate students in the necessity of participating in the IEP process and educational planning. The topics of the final unit included: understanding transition, writing post-secondary goals, understanding the purpose of the IEP and transition, writing annual goals and objectives and participating in the IEP meetings.

A study presented by Denney (2007), examined the impact that the CASAP had on the goal attainment and self-determination skills of student with mild to moderate disabilities. The results of the study implied the CASAP had some impact on the students' goal attainment and perceived level of self-determination. The relationships found between transition related goals and self-determination skills was inconclusive for the most part, however, positive correlations and patterns were found between the different self-determination components.

The research presented by Denney (2007), consisted of three research questions. The first surrounded the impact of the CASAP on goal attainment as assessed by parents and teachers. A Goal Attainment Scale (GAS) initially developed in 1968 and used in many additional well cited studies, was utilized. Denney (2007), reported utilizing a

sample consisting of only 10, non-randomly selected participants and therefore the findings could not be generalized beyond the sample. The second research question relied on an AIR scale to determine the differences of perceived levels of self-determination among parents, teachers, and students after the CASAP program participation. The third question investigated the relationship between the attainment of transition related goals and self-determination skills as assessed by the AIR scale.

The AIR Self Determination Scale was an assessment instrument designed to measure a students' capacity for and opportunity to engage in self-determining behavior. The development of the AIR Self Determination Scale was guided by the theory that prospects for self-determination were influenced by both the students' skills, knowledge, and beliefs (capacity) and by opportunities in the environment. Thinking, Doing and Adjusting were the three major components of the scale. The AIR scale provided information on students' capacity and opportunities to self-determine within each of the components. Capacity referred to students' knowledge, abilities, and perceptions that enabled them to be self-determined. Opportunity referred to students' chances at school or home to use their knowledge and abilities. The AIR Self-Determination Scale assessed how individuals interacted with opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Research conducted by Lee, Little, Palmer, Soukup, Todd, and Wehmeyer (2008) found limited, but promising, evidence of the relationship between and impact of self-determination on access to the general education curriculum. The research confirmed that students with disabilities can achieve educational goals linked to the general education curriculum through instruction to promote self-determination and student-directed learning (Lee et al., 2008). Further, there were multiple benefits from and

reasons to expand the degree to which students with disabilities received instruction to promote self-determination across disability categories along with students without disabilities (Lee et al., 2008). The research provided by Lee et al. (2008) utilized both the AIR Self-Determination Scale and the GAS.

According to Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test and Wood (2004), various publishers have developed several self-determination assessment instruments to accompany curriculum packages focused on teaching self-determination skills. The AIR Self-Determination Scale was formulated as a standalone instrument (Algozzine et al., 2004). Some published scales were designed for self-reporting, while the AIR gathered data from a combination of sources including the student, parents and teachers. Although most assessment instruments offered information that educators could use to develop goals and objectives for instruction, a few which specifically addressed this step was the AIR Self-Determination Scale and the Choice Maker Self-Determination Assessment (Algozzine et al., 2004).

Since self-determination was considered both a process and an outcome, it was difficult to quantify. While the literature on self-determination was extensive, a large portion was descriptive or theoretical, not empirically based. Wood et al., (1999) located 450 articles from 1972 thru 2000 as part of a national synthesis on self-determination. According to Algozzine et al. (2001), only 9.5% of the published literature met the inclusion criteria for the literature review. The research consisted of 26 group and 25 single subject studies. The research focused on choice making (38%), self-advocacy (37%), decision making (20%), and problem solving (20%). While all components of self-determination were reflected, most of the studies focused on teaching choice-making

to individuals with moderate and severe mental retardation. Most of the studies included transition aged students (29 studies) or adults (24 studies). Self-determination intervention studies typically demonstrated improvement in self-determination skills. Conversely, data on the application of these skills was limited.

Research Related to Appropriate Services

While the context of providing secondary special education services evolved over time, the concept of interagency collaboration was a continuous element of the transition services concept (Noonan, 2004). Noonan, (2004) provided an overview of three major national movements surrounding services in transition: (a) cooperative work/study programs, (b) career education, and (c) transition initiatives.

Noonan, (2004) offered a qualitative research approach to identify and describe previously unknown strategies and interventions among high-performing school districts in interagency collaboration. The research included 38 participants, representing 29 high-performing districts and state-level transition coordinators from five different states. While the research indicated sound professional interagency collaboration efforts, it lacked student or family input. While the research findings implied the dependency of families of youth with disabilities helping create linkages with services, it failed to include their perspectives.

The research was a qualitative study and utilized districts defined as high-performing in interagency collaboration from data provided by the Transition Outcomes Project (TOP) initially performed in seven states. All TOP data were collected between 2002 and 2004. Rather than identifying or defining what constituted a high-performing

district, the research relied on analyzing TOP compliance data from 198 districts across five states.

Noonan, (2004) found high-performing districts used distinct strategies to facilitate collaboration. Collaboration with multiple agencies, meeting and training students and families, and joint training with outside agencies were strategies promoting collaboration discovered within the research. Staffing issues, lack of funding and lack of parental involvement were identified through the research as major barriers to interagency collaboration. The two staffing barriers which emerged were lack of knowledge and lack of time. These barriers appeared to prevent transition coordinators from effectively collaborating with adult agencies (Noonan, 2004). Further research indicated partnerships between professionals and families was most productive when the professionals treated the students with disabilities with dignity and respect, displayed positive attitudes toward them, and took into consideration the child's strengths, preferences and humanity (Park & Turnball, 2002).

K-12 and Post-secondary Distinctions

It was important to remember when students with disabilities made the transition from high school Section 504 services to higher education, there were several distinctions to keep in mind. In higher education as well as employment, the individual with a disability bared the burden of proof in order to receive public services and public accommodations (Babbitt, 2004). Unlike secondary education, colleges and universities were not required to provide evaluations of individuals with disabilities. In secondary education, the school was responsible for adequate and regular assessments regardless of whether IDEA or Section 504 (Getzel & Wehman, 2005; Heyward, 1998).

Section 504 plans and IEP's from secondary institutions were not binding upon any institution or entity outside of the school in which it was developed. There were no meetings each year in higher education with counselors, teachers, administrators or parents (Heyward, 1998). FAPE, first put forth in law under special education legislation in 1975 no longer applied either. FAPE was still referenced as a requirement for high school under regulations governing Section 504; however, there were no references with respect to higher education in any federal regulations for either Section 504 or ADA. Rather, students in higher education paid the same fees as their non-disabled peers.

According to Jim Marks, former Disabilities Director at The University of Montana, a higher education FAPE was not regarded as part of Section 504's nondiscrimination prohibitions. In all areas outside of public schools, nondiscrimination was accomplished by means of barrier removal, including reasonable accommodations (personal communication, May 20, 2006). Students in post-secondary education were no longer placed in an environment which was restrictive or protective in any way. Such placement in a least restrictive environment would be a violation of an individual's civil rights and counter to the spirit of Section 504 and the ADA (Jim Marks, personal communication, May 20, 2006). While this information was gathered in 2006, according to Jim Marks (Montana State Director of Vocational Rehabilitation at Department of Public Health and Human Services), this information was valid and pertinent in 2012 (Jim Marks, personal communication, January 27, 2012).

Some services provided to students in secondary education under Section 504 may not be provided in post-secondary education. Services that reduced the academic standards such as shortening assignments was viewed as compromising academic

standards and was not reasonable to request in post-secondary education (AHEAD, 2006).

Instructor variances contributed to barring a smooth transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Teaching in higher education varied widely as a result of campus size, class size mission statements, instructional experience, diversity, and philosophies (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). It was essential for faculty to be actively engaged in reflection of their teaching practices, attend training in effective instructional strategies, and be flexible (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). Getzel and Wehman (2005), further emphasized the notion that many faculty members were unaware of validated instructional products or practices that could enhance the learning environment for students with disabilities.

K-12 and Post-secondary Connection

A divide existed between the philosophies and programs that served students under IDEA and Section 504 in secondary and post-secondary institutions. The approaches in primary and secondary education were well standardized, nurturing, and structured, but they were often varied in post-secondary settings (Harris & Robertson, 2001). There existed variation by institutional type and size in what was accepted as verification of student disabilities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

Problems related to this disconnect were noticeable in areas such as access to college-prep courses, grade inflation, placement into remedial-level coursework in college, conflicting conceptions of student assessment, special problems endemic to the senior year in high school, and a lack of early and high-quality college counseling for all students (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). To further compound the disconnect between

secondary and post-secondary, Kirst and Venezia (2004) suggested that many of the individuals in the secondary setting posed in counseling positions were not able to devote the necessary time to college guidance and counseling. Specifically, secondary counselors were responsible for scheduling, test administration, coordination of programs, consultation with parents, teachers, and social service agencies, and referrals. Counselors at many secondary institutions believed they did not have enough time to work with students on issues that were mandated by the states (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Teachers were often approached about collegiate plans in the secondary arena because they were more accessible, but typically lacked the training and materials needed to provide students with accurate, up-to-date information (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). This still remained true in the State of Montana in 2011 as secondary institutions were not required by law to track secondary transition or post school outcomes (OPI, 2011).

Most states were not able to identify students' needs as they move from one education system to another or assess outcomes from K-16 reforms because they did not have K-16 data systems. If states were to determine students' needs across the K-16 continuum, they must have collected and used longitudinal data from across the K-16 levels (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). According to Kirst and Venezia (2004), no state had implemented a comprehensive K-16 accountability system that included incentives and sanctions for post-secondary institutions and mechanisms that connected the levels. This was still true in the State of Montana in 2011, due to secondary transition and post school outcome data not being required to be reported (OPI, 2011).

Parental Influences

All of the above factors made the transition from secondary to post-secondary education even more difficult for students with disabilities. Another factor associated with contributing an enormous impact on the educational environment was parents. "The most sensitive nerve in the human body is the parental nerve." (Babbitt, 2004, pg. 43) Educators in the elementary and secondary arena have known the truth of this statement and have experienced the painful consequences of not sufficiently respecting it in relating to the parents of students with disabilities (Babbit, 2004). This point was driven home with greater frequency and troubling results in the post-secondary arena (Heyward, 1998). While this was true in 1998, it remained relevant in 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Students and parents were often surprised and upset with what they encountered in post-secondary education. Parents came to post-secondary education with coping strategies and skills that had been developed in an environment where educational agencies had absolute responsibility and were ultimately accountable. For example, school districts located students with disabilities, evaluated them and designed an educational placement that provided them a FAPE regardless of the nature or severity of their needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In the secondary environment, parents functioned principally as advocates and enforcers (Heyward, 1998). Unfortunately, their experience in the secondary environment did not prepare parents for moving into a new environment in which there was shared responsibility between their children and the institution and where their sons and daughters were required to initiate the process for provision of auxiliary aids and/or accommodations and provided documentation

sufficient enough to establish the existence of a disability (Heyward, 1998; OPI, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Research has shown that parent participation and leadership in transition planning played an important role in assuring successful transitions for youth with disabilities (NCSET, 2004). For example, Carter (2002) noted that over three decades of research demonstrated that parent/ family involvement contributed in a variety of ways, to improved student outcomes related to learning and school success.

Benefits of College Participation

At one time a high school diploma was all that was necessary for an individual to obtain a job that could guarantee entrance into the middle class, at least a coherent program of post-secondary training, if not a college degree, was typically necessary to achieve the same economic status (BLS, 2012; Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Further, data supported the correlation between increased education and higher salaries (BLS, 2012). According to Getzel and Wehman (2005), there were three main areas benefiting individuals who attend college. The first benefit of obtaining a college education was becoming knowledgeable about various academic and cultural events in the world. The second benefit of participating in college was expanding socialization skills. The college experience required students to learn how to interact with fellow students, professors, residence hall counselors, traffic and security officers, and the many other individuals who made up the college community (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). The last benefit of college participation listed by Getzel and Wehman (2005) was the establishment of personal networks. These authors felt networking may have been the most important benefit discussed. Some students with good college experiences made lifelong friends

who ultimately fostered long-term relationships that could be helpful in different walks of life (Getzel & Wehman, 2005).

Graduation rates. Data on graduation rates for Bachelor's degree in the United States was approximately 32 percent (National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2012). The U.S. Department of Education (2012) reported that more than one quarter of freshmen at four-year colleges and nearly half of those at two-year colleges did not make it to their second year. AHEAD (2006) revealed that as many as 17% of all students attending higher education in the United States were identified as having a disability. Within five years of starting post-secondary education, only 41% of students with disabilities reported they had earned a college degree or credential (AHEAD, 2006).

Student assistance. Aside from post-secondary education, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency (Ticket) program all offered an array of employment and education-related services that aided some IDEA qualified individuals with disabilities (United States General Accounting Office (GAO), 2003). Conversely, several factors impeded participation by IDEA populations. The lack of participation may have been explained in part by the insufficient capacity of the VR and WIA programs to serve eligible populations requesting services, and potential concerns of Ticket participants about losing public assistance because of employment income. A general lack of awareness by individuals with disabilities and families concerning these programs may also have limited participation (GAO, 2003).

Services provided by VR, WIA and Ticket programs provided similar and complementary services that could ease transition from high school to post-secondary

education and employment, but factors affected how individuals qualifying under IDEA used them (GAO, 2003). Services provided by VR, WIA and Ticket included tutoring and study skills training, job coaching, placement, counseling, and transportation. However, individuals identified with disabilities under IDEA were not automatically eligible for these services (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Challenges Students with Disabilities Face in Gaining Access to Post-secondary Education

Educational access. If students with disabilities did not meet the academic criteria required to enter college, they were unable to pursue a college education (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). The amount of tests students took between secondary and post-secondary was staggering, specifically for college bound students (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). In California, college-bound students could take over twenty tests between high school and the beginning of college (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Compounding this issue further, once a student was admitted to a college or university, they typically had to take more placement exams to determine whether they were ready for collegiate-level academics. Individual departments and classes at the collegiate level tested students for placement in either advanced or remedial courses and there was no uniformity among the varying tests (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Differences in the content and format between assessments used at the secondary exit and college entrance levels displayed a great variance in expectations regarding what students needed to know and were able to do in order to graduate from high school and enter college (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

Getzel and Wehman (2005) offered a number of reasons why students with disabilities were unable to achieve academic criteria necessary to enter college. In

secondary settings, students with disabilities were often placed in special education classrooms, removed from other students for all or most of the day. In these settings students with disabilities may have received substandard secondary curricular instruction (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). Teachers, career counselors, administrators, family members, and students themselves often had low expectations and a limited sense of opportunity (Chang, Jones, & Stodden, 2002). These lowered expectations and perceptions left students with a sense of failure before they even begun to explore their interests and aspirations (Getzel & Wehman, 2005).

Another factor challenging students with disabilities in gaining access to post-secondary education was that many teachers were not trained in addressing the individual needs of students with disabilities (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). State and local education agencies across the United States were experiencing shortages of qualified personnel to serve youth with disabilities (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). According to the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (2003), approximately 3,000 additional special education teachers were needed in secondary education.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandated that each state must implement a statewide accountability system for all public schools and their students. Although NCLB was intended to provide more choices for schools, parents, and students, as well as accountability, it may have posed further challenges for students with disabilities in gaining access to post-secondary education due to the reliance on standardized testing as a means of measuring achievement (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). According to Kirst and Venezia (2001), 20% of students bound for four-year institutions and nearly 40% of students headed for two-year schools indicated that they would not

take all the courses American College Testing (ACT) deemed necessary for college-level work. Retention and completion rates in many of our public colleges and universities was very low. (Kirst &Venezia, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Taking standardized tests were obstacles to students with disabilities because standardized tests were often time limited and in a multiple-choice style that required extensive reading (Getzel & Wehman, 2005).

Yet another factor challenging students with disabilities access to post-secondary education was that a majority of students were not active in their IEP meetings (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). This often hindered opportunities for students with disabilities to develop and practice self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). Not only did this lack of participation affect self-determination and advocacy skills, but also hindered understanding of how their disability affected their learning and the potential assistance they could have received (Stodden et al., 2003). If a student needed additional documentation, it was the student's responsibility to obtain this information. The student's school files and medical records, if appropriate, needed to be collected and maintained by the student after leaving high school. As a result, it was imperative that high school students learn self-determination skills, including IEP and other record-management skills, so that they had the ability to assume responsibility for their records and for other aspects of adult life (Hart et al., 2002).

Students with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Heritage

Persons with disabilities must often overcome a variety of challenges not faced by their peers without disabilities in order to gain entry and succeed in post-secondary educational settings. These challenges were especially difficult for persons with

disabilities of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) heritage (Applequist et al., 2006). Comparing White students with disabilities with disabled CLD students, CLD students were more likely to face social barriers, experience negative effects of having grown up in poverty, and had difficulty processing oral and written English (Applequist et al., 2006).

According to the National Longitude Transition Study (NLTS) (2005), CLD students achieved poorer transition outcomes, including lower employment rates, lower average wages, and lower post-secondary participation rates. With the exception of Asians/Pacific Islanders, CLD groups had much higher rates of poverty than whites (Applequist et al., 2006). Poverty had a pervasive negative impact on a host of factors relevant to academic achievement (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Barriers to educational success at the post-secondary level for CLD persons with disabilities were related more to the effects of poverty than to cultural or linguistic factors (Applequist et al., 2006).

CLD students with disabilities were more likely than their White peers with disabilities to feel culturally isolated on many post-secondary campuses (Applequist et al., 2006). Roughly six percent of undergraduate white students in 1995-1996 reported a disability compared to over 13 percent for the highest ethnic group, American Indian/Alaskan Native (Applequist et al., 2006). The U.S. Census Bureau's (2006) racial/ethnic categories were as follows in descending order of proportion of the US population: (a) White, (b) Hispanic, (c) Black, (d) Asian/Pacific Islander, and (e) American Indian/Alaskan Native. Montana OPI (2012) reported American Indians comprise 11.1 percent compared to a White population of 81.7 percent of school racial

makeup. The gap between white students and American Indian students was 23 percentage points regarding secondary educational completion rates (OPI, 2012).

Post-secondary faculty, administrators, and support personnel often lacked the awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to effectively support students with disabilities (Applequist et al., 2006). Diversity issues may be addressed in orientation for new faculty and staff, in workshops and retreats for existing faculty and staff, campus websites, publications distributed campus-wide, as well as in the publications, websites, conferences and workshops of professional organizations (Applequist et al., 2006).

Transition

Background. In accordance with IDEA, schools and community agencies should have worked together to provide services for youths with disabilities. IDEA defined transition services as a coordinated set of activities for students with disabilities. These services were required to be designed within an outcome-oriented process, promoting movement from school to post-school activities including: post-secondary education, adult services, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, independent living and community participation (NCLD, 2008; NCSET, 2007; IDEA 1997, Transition Requirements, 2000). Further research provided yet another definition of transition. According to Baer and Flexer (2008), the transition services definition consisted of four essential elements: (a) determining students' strengths, needs, interest and preferences; (b) results and outcome-oriented planning; (c) a coordinated set of activities; and (d) promoting movement to post-school activities. These four essential elements included a range of best practices in transition including person-centered

planning, interagency collaboration, follow-up and follow along services and self-determination (Baer & Flexer, 2008).

According to the National Center for Post-secondary Improvement (2001), a large portion of the general public held secondary institutions responsible for students not coming to post-secondary education fully prepared. In short, post-secondary institutions were admired for their work while secondary education was often identified as the weak link (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Very few people seen secondary and post-secondary education as a continuum in which both institutions played a shared role in preparing students (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). According to Kirst and Venezia (2004), most educational professionals felt the presence of K-16 services, such as better counseling or higher education collaboration with the secondary sector, could contribute to increased student success.

Further research surrounding transition indicated that successful transition outcomes were supported by several activities: (a) individual planning, (b) students' active participation, (c) family involvement, (d) interagency collaboration, and (e) transition-focused instruction (Katsiyannis & Zhang, 2001). According to O'Leary, Storms, and Williams (2002), the concept of transition had three major components: (a) coach every student and family to think about goals for life after high school and develop long-range plans to get there; (b) design the high school experience to ensure that the student gained the skills and competencies needed to achieve his or her desired post-school goals; and (c) identify and link students and families to any needed post-school services, supports, or programs before the student exited the school system.

Transition services. Transition planning and services were required by both federal and state laws (Brown, Galloway, Mrazek, Noy, & Stodden, 2005). Transition services were intended to prepare individuals with disabilities to live, learn and earn in the community as adults. Further, effective interagency transition required collaboration between federal/state legislation, families, education, employment, health, mental health and others (Brown et al., 2005).

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) (2004) offered a myriad of funding systems, legislation, and resources a community could and should have aligned with in order to meet the needs of transition-aged students with disabilities. Some of these included: (a) Education, (b) health and human services, (c) workforce development, (d) social security, (e) vocational rehabilitation services, (f) parents and families, (g) youth. In order to improve transition, the Office of Public Education (2003), made recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education. The Office of Public Education (2003) suggested transition services may have been improved by (a) disseminating information on best practices for collecting and use data on post-secondary status (b) provided more timely and consistent services to states, and (c) identified strategies that informed students and families about federal transition resources.

Further research provided by Noonan, (2004) suggested the need for professional development programs specific to transition. Noonan's research consisted of 38 participants from 29 districts from five different states and surrounded developing interventions to improve interagency collaboration in providing transition services for students with disabilities. Noonan (2004) found that many transition coordinators felt like they were the local experts and often supported secondary special educators, general

educators, and administrators in understanding requirements and resources. Noonan, (2004) suggested further research was needed regarding whether states should have a coordinator specializing in transition working with families, students, adult agencies and schools, rather than relying on transition coordinators' experiences. Some states have adopted pamphlets depicting transition strategies, however, Montana has not developed a consistent set of parameters for students with disabilities' transition.

Transition procedures. NCSET (2004) provided methods for schools and community resources to become better coordinated. NCSET (2004) believed the coordination could be achieved through a method used to link community resources with organizational goals, strategies, and expected outcomes. NCSET (2004) entitled this method as resource mapping. Resource mapping was a collaborative activity in which a variety of informed partners (a) established a shared vision, definition, and desired results, (b) identified all complementary resources from multiple sources that could be aligned to accomplish a vision, (c) noted any priorities that lacked resources and then designed solutions to fill those gaps, and (d) implemented an ongoing process that maximized all relevant resources by employing them in a strategic way to accomplish common goals (NCSET, 2004). Resource mapping allowed communities to identify existing resources and determine what new resources were needed to build systems that serve students rather than targeting funds based on criteria and categories. The process helped agencies and programs that shared common goals to begin a dialogue and build on each other's efforts instead of working in isolation. Furthermore, mapping resources helped a community identify a need for additional policy or legislation to fill a gap or enhance an existing program (NCSET, 2004).

NCSET (2004) felt resource mapping had many benefits including: (a) gaining in-depth information about agencies (b) identified opportunities and challenges for meeting transition needs of youth with disabilities, and (c) provided for collaboration across agencies through policy recommendations. Other benefits of resource mapping offered by NCSET (2004) included: (a) identification of new resources, (b) determination of effectiveness of existing resources, (c) improving resource alignment and coordination, (d) enhanced coordination and collaboration, and (e) development of better policies and legislation.

Brown et al., (2005), offered a comprehensive publication regarding transition team development and facilitation (appendix B) complimentary to the NCSET resource mapping techniques mentioned above. Interagency transition teams was defined as a group of stakeholders who were supporting youth with disabilities so they could have the best chances for success as adults (Brown et al., 2005). It was found that interagency teams at state levels could be comprised of representatives from several agencies involved in preparing, connecting, and receiving youth with disabilities as they transitioned from secondary education to post school environments (Brown et al., 2005).

According to Brown et al. (2005), interagency transition teams served various purposes including: (a) identified local needs or discontinuity in policies, procedures, services, and programs that hinder youth with disabilities from achieving desired, valued outcomes, (b) increased the availability, quality and access of interagency transition services, (c) helped other service representatives understand the educational service system, and (d) enabled youth with disabilities to live, work, and continue to learn within

the community. A full publication regarding interagency transition team development and facilitation is available from The University of Montana in Appendix B.

Montana Education

Background. One in five or 21 percent of Montana adults reported living with a disability in 2003 (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey, 2005). The number of students in Montana identified in the category of having other health impairment grew from 177 students in 1989-90 to 1,502 students reported in 2003-04. A U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, policy letter issued in the early 1990's made it possible for children with attention deficit disorders to qualify for special education under the category of other health impairment and federal regulations listed attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in the definition for other health impairment (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005). There was every reason to believe that the number of requests for ADA accommodations would continue to increase, not only in number but also in analytical complexity. The data from OPI (2012) indicated that the population of students who were enrolled in public schools and served by special education was 11.8%. At the same time Montana saw an overall drop in total student (pre-kindergarten through grade 12) enrollment also (OPI, 2011).

Almost 65 percent of all students who received special education services in Montana had their primary disability identified as learning disabled or speech-language impairment identified as their primary disability (OPI, 2011). These two categories comprised almost three-quarters of all students who received special education services (OPI, 2011). Research conducted by OPI (2007) suggested Montana students with

disabilities dropped out at a higher rate than the general public school students. Montana OPI (2011) reported 11.8 percent of Montana students ages three to 21, annually were on IEP's in the Montana public secondary education system. Once a student reached the age of 21 services required under IDEA stopped (OPE, 2011). In 2011 OPI reported 17,213 students throughout Montana was served under IDEA (OPI, 2011). Data reported by Montana OPI (2008) stated two-thirds of high school districts were found to be non-compliant with the IDEA regulations on secondary transition (data not collected on the 2011 report).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 required states to submit a State Performance Plan that detailed efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEIA, and how the state would improve implementation (OPI, 2011). The primary focus of the Performance Plan was based on three monitoring prongs for the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education. The three priorities were: (a) Provision of a FAPE in the least restrictive environment (LRE), (b) the state exercise of general supervisory authority, and (c) disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic groups in special education and related services (OPI, 2011).

Montana used 20 performance indicators to establish measurable targets which were used to assess the performance of both local educational agencies (LEA) and the overall state in special education. The OPI (2011) report summarized data from the 2007-2008 school year. According to OPI (2011), the state as a whole did not meet three of the 20 performance indicators. The first indicator not met was graduation rates. 76.8

percent of students enrolled in special education graduated in 07-08 school year (OPI, 2011).

Another indicator Montana did not meet was adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP data for the OPI (2011) report was extracted from the 2008-2009 school year. AYP was measured using Montana's required third, eighth, and 10th grade criterion which referenced reading and math test scores, participation, attendance, and graduation rates (OPI, 2011). The number of local education agencies (LEA) meeting AYP objectives for progress for students with IEP's in 2008-2009 was six or 8.8 percent (OPI, 2011). In 2007-2008 school year, 31 LEA's met the AYP objectives. Secondary transition and post school outcomes were additional performance indicators; however, the school districts were not required to report this data in the 07-08 school year (OPI, 2011). OPI (2014) reported 56.1 percent of Montana LEA's did not meet overall AYP objectives.

Montana expenditures. During the 2003-04 school year, approximately $93.9 million dollars was spent on special education services in Montana public K-12 schools. In the 1989-90 school year $41 million dollars of state, federal, and local funds were spent on special education. In FY 06, approximately $105.3 million dollars were spent on special education (OPI, 2007). Approximately $135 million dollars was spent on special education in fiscal year (FY) 2010 (OPI, 2011). While much of the increase could be attributed to inflation, an increase in the number of students served by special education was also a factor (OPI, 2011). The Montana state share of funding the total costs of special education slipped from approximately 81.5 percent in school year 1989-90 to approximately 37 percent in FY 06 (OPI, 2007).

Local funding saw the greatest share of increase in the costs associated with special education rising from three million dollars in 1989-90 to $32.7 million dollars in the 2003-04 school year. In FY 2010-11, $41 million dollars in local funds were expended on Special Education in Montana (OPI, 2012). Overall, a total of $116.6 million dollars was spent on Montana special education in FY 2009 (OPI, 2012). According to OPI (2012), the Montana state share of the total costs of special education decreased from 81.5 percent in FY 2009 to 38 percent in FY 2010.

Determining eligibility. Montana did not have a coordinated system to collect post-secondary school outcome data (OPI, 2011). In addition, universities throughout the Montana University System (MUS) had varying policies and procedures of providing reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. Further, the complexities increased with institutional policies for required documentation varies according to each disability (Montana Transition Project, 2005). According to the Montana Transition Project (2005), institutions throughout the MUS had distinct guidelines regarding what documentation was needed in order for students with disabilities to receive accommodations. While each institution within the MUS had varying methods of determining eligibility for accommodations pertaining to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the American Disabilities Act, all institutions made reference to documentation listing a diagnosis, functional limitations, and a recommendation for accommodations. The documentation throughout the MUS must have been provided by a qualified professional certified to assess the disability (Montana Transition Project, 2005). Appropriate professionals included, but were not limited to,

doctors, psychologists, and licensed mental health professionals specific to the disability and the type of functional limitation it imposed (Babbitt, 2004).

The MUS initiated the development documentation guidelines based on the best practices published by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). The Disability Documentation Guidelines draft submitted October 24, 2005 gave notation to individuals and environments being different, so the evidence of disability and its impact varied in its content according to local context. In short, the Disability Documentation Guidelines for the MUS suggested that program modifications may not transfer automatically from one class or campus to another. Decisions were made on a case-by-case basis and were supported by common sense and demonstrable rationales.

In February of 2005, the Montana Commissioner of Higher Education, Sheila Sterns, formulated a committee to develop a three-year plan in order to address concerns shared with her by the Governor's Advisory Council on Disabilities (GACD). The MUS committee consisted of representatives from each of the campuses of the MUS system. The council met several times each year and continued to meet on an on-going basis. The committee reviewed the proposed objectives submitted by GACD and developed action plans and timelines to address issues associated with Montana disabilities. Eight objectives addressed by the MUS committee included: (a) assure that units of the MUS completed the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (SETP) required by the ADA and routinely produced progress reports addressing barrier removal, (b) assured that a consistent policy for students with disabilities regarding the documentation of disability provided a seamless provision of accommodations between the units of the MUS, (c) developed a standardized recording format for tracking the number of students with

disabilities that were enrolled in the units including but not limited to: type of disability, retention, and graduation, (d) addressed the under-representation of students who were deaf, blind, or had psychiatric disabilities in the MUS, (e) recognized the scarcity of qualified sign language interpreters and the impact on the MUS. Developed a support system that created a career ladder for interpreters with ongoing competency evaluations focused on obtaining Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Certification, (f) addressed the lack of funding specifically allocated for Disability Student Services (DSS) offices and barrier removal at the individual units. Addressed the lack of clearly identified staff in DSS offices and money set aside for barrier removal, (g) assured web accessibility to the services and programs offered over the Internet by the MUS, and (h) improved the MUS's response to serving students with mental disabilities.

Challenges.

Personnel. The ability to recruit and retain qualified special education personnel was a challenge to the State of Montana. A factor influencing retention and recruitment of special education personnel consisted of the remoteness of many Montana communities, required paperwork, salaries and meetings associated with special education (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005). Finding and affording qualified professionals certified to assess the variety of disabilities for Montana students once they arrived at post-secondary institutions contained both financial and accessibility burdens (Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature, 2005). Research conducted by Park and Turnball (2002), suggested a lack of training and qualifications on the part of the professionals and paraprofessionals

contributed to the degree of stress experienced by families of children with disabilities, as unqualified professionals tended to provide ineffective interventions.

Physical. Montana consisted of 410 public school districts consisting of 142,159 students (OPI, 2014) spread throughout 147,046 total square miles. Montana's vast expansion consisted of 550 miles from its east to west boundaries and 320 miles from north to southern boundaries. With a sparse population of 6.7 persons per square mile (OPI, 2014) it was difficult for some students with disabilities to access qualified professionals (OPI, 2014).

Funding. It was difficult to expect individual school districts to fund transitional documentation requirements with a school funding system that was deemed unconstitutional and was under legislative review. "Although both state and federal governments mandate school districts to provide the considerable services necessary for each individual child, neither government provides the necessary funds to fully pay the costs of providing the required services" (Columbia Falls v The State of Montana, 2004). While much of this was debated in 2004, according to OPI (2011), funding for Montana special education still remained largely underfunded.

On March 22, 2005, the Supreme Court of the State of Montana upheld the District Court's opinion that Montana's public school funding system violates Article X, Section 1(3), of the Montana Constitution. Article X, Section 1(3), mandated that the Legislature provided a basic system of free quality public education. In addition, funds and expenses were to be distributed in an equitable manner (State of Montana School Funding Formula, 2005). The Supreme Court also determined that the Montana Legislature could best construct a system of free quality education if it first defined what

a quality system of education meant (State of Montana School Funding Formula, 2005). The 2005 Legislature responded to the Court's opinion by adopting Senate Bill No. 152. Senate Bill No. 152 was an attempt at defining a system of free quality education (State of Montana School Funding Formula, 2005).

Research reported in the Special Education Report to the 2011 Montana Legislature, (OPI, 2011) suggested that Montana students with disabilities dropped out at a higher rate than the general student population. National research conducted by Bracco and Kirst (2005) indicated that 70 percent of graduating students pursue some form of post-secondary education and only 23 percent received bachelor's degrees. The authors, Bracco and Kirst (2005) further suggested that the connection between secondary and post-secondary education in the United States was a major factor for students who are not prepared for college-level work. Further disconnects between secondary and post-secondary education existed between high school exit exams and college admissions and placement tests differences (Bracco & Kirst, 2005).

Summary of Chapter Two

Overall guiding principle behind this research was the improvement of transition to higher education for students with disabilities. As the review of literature suggested, self-advocacy skills, and transition services were primary factors leading to successful transition into post-secondary education. As the review of literature suggested, distinctions between secondary and post-secondary education regarding obtaining accommodations for students with disabilities were prevalent. Further, secondary institutions that provided transition services for students with disabilities maximized students' adjustment into the adult community (Siira, 2005). Limited research has been

conducted regarding transition for students with disabilities; however, the research that has been conducted suggested self-advocacy skills were critical components for students to be successful in post-secondary education. Further review of the literature indicated the correlation between increased education and higher salaries (BLS, 2012).

Legislation surrounding students with disabilities has evolved over time. The adaptation secondary institutions needed to abide by regarding post-secondary transition was the IDEA version adopted in 2007 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Post-secondary institutions were still bound by Section 504 of the ADA, however, Congress signed the Amendments Act into law in September 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The Amendments Act did not alter the IDEA and only amended the ADA, therefore, did not affect either laws requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The Amendments Act emphasized that the definition of disability in ADA and Section 504 should be interpreted to allow for a more broad coverage and also an individual with a disability should not demand extensive analysis (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Research surrounding the different types of assistance for youth with disabilities making the transition from secondary to post-secondary education was rare in professional literature (Stodden et al., 2003). Based upon the review of the literature, there seemed to be little understanding of the process of assistance provision during these transitions or of the potential negative impacts that may be experienced by students with disabilities as they sought preparation for adult roles in their community (Stodden et al., 2003). There was little empirical evidence surrounding the value of specific types of assistance, or the transition of specific types of assistance from one environment to another (Stodden et al., 2003). In short, existing research surrounding transition

procedures from K-12 to post K-12 education remained incomplete (Siira, 2005). Specifically, Montana was lacking research and data collection procedures congruent with transition procedures. Montana was not required to collect secondary transition or post school outcome data since 2008 (OPI, 2011). Funding for Montana Special Education was still not at the 40 percent level first promised by Congress during the initial implementation of disabilities mandates (OPI, 2011). If Congress funded Montana special education at 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure, the level of funding would only have covered approximately 55 percent of Montana's K-12 special education costs (OPI, 2011).

Chapter Three

Methodology

Federal laws provided for the provision of transition services for students with disabilities. These services were delivered by a variety of methods and individuals by means of high school special education personnel and college disability services. The review of literature in Chapter Two indicated that high school and post-secondary education professionals and districts understood the importance of transition process, but may have been lacking the services or skills necessary for the preparation for self-advocacy. While some states adopted state-wide transition programs, transition services were district by district, individual by individual in the State of Montana. The purpose of this research was find out if there was a relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA. Based upon the review of literature, this research examined procedures appropriate to secondary education that were associated with assisting students having IEPs regarding a successful transition into post-secondary education. This chapter discussed the method used for the evaluation of the relationship of self-advocacy and college freshman first semester GPA in the State of Montana including the purpose of the evaluation, the research question explored, and presented a model for the evaluation.

Research design. According to Creswell (2003), the steps involved in research design was (a) assess the knowledge claim brought to the study, (b) consider the strategy of inquiry, and (c) identify specific methods. Methodologies used within this research were closely associated with the post positivism perspectives. Creswell (2003) asserted post positivists challenge the notion of absolute truth of knowledge and recognize

researchers cannot be positive about claims when studying the behavior and actions of humans. The strategies of inquiry used in this research involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data. This research design collected quantitative data in the form of a survey.

According to Creswell (2003), quantitative approaches were useful when a topic has not been addressed with a certain sample or group of people, existing theories did not apply, or concept or phenomenon needed to be understood because little research has been done on it. While there has been a fair amount of research regarding disabilities conducted, research addressing self-advocacy skill and how they relate to college GPA was limited.

This study was built on, and added to, the field of transition research. Educational leaders will be able to use the outcomes of this study for specific transition practices for students transitioning into post-secondary education. The research involved electronic surveys which were administered to students in both two-year and four-year post-secondary institutions throughout the Montana University System (MUS). Surveys consisted of questions surrounding disabilities, transition and self-advocacy. The researcher purchased an electronic survey service (Survey Monkey) to maintain anonymity with all responders.

Null hypothesis. The null hypothesis used for this dissertation was: There was no relationship between self-advocacy skills and college first semester GPA. The selection of the null was determined based on the review of literature and formulated on Creswell's (2003) notion that hypotheses shape and specifically focus the purpose of the study. The hypotheses formulated for this research was the prediction the researcher held about the relationships among the variables (Creswell, 2003).

Population and sample. The sample for this research was drawn from students of the 14 public two and four-year institutions of higher education currently within the Montana University System (MUS). Specifically, the population was Montana State University (MSU)- Bozeman, MSU-Billings, MSU-Billings College of Technology (COT), MSU-Northern, MSU-Great Falls COT, The University of Montana (UM)-Missoula, UM-Missoula COT, Montana Tech, Montana Tech COT, UM-Western. Three community colleges were also included in the study: Dawson Community College, Flathead Valley Community College, and Miles Community College. Further, the research sample included the seven Montana tribal colleges: Salish Kootenai College, Blackfeet Community College, Little Big Horn College, Fort Peck Community College, Fort Belknap College, Chief Dull Knife College, and Stone Chile College. The sample consisted of voluntarily submitted information provided by students from the population.

With the notion of gathering voluntary information form participants for this research, participants self-identified as having an IEP in high school for at least two years and are an age of 18 or older were used for data analysis. In order to explore the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA for students with disabilities, participants experiencing this phenomenon were voluntarily selected for the data analysis.

Babbie (2007), indicated where specifying the term college student, this research needed to consider full and part-time students, degree and non-degree candidates, undergraduate and graduate students. This research surveyed all the above students and included in the data analysis, students who self-identified to have a disability under ADA

definitions, were at the age of 18 or older, and self-reported as having an IEP for at least two years while in high school.

While the population included all of the universities in the MUS, the sample consisted of participants who voluntarily submitted information regarding being on an IEP in high school. 52 total respondents filled out the survey, however only 17 respondents voluntarily submitted that they had been on and IEP in high school. Therefore, the sample consisted of 17 respondents throughout the MUS.

Data collection procedures. According to Babbie (2007) surveys included the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires was defined as an instrument specifically designed to elicit information useful for analysis (Babbie, 2007). According to Babbie (2007), there were three methods for distributing survey questionnaires to a sample of respondents. The first method, self-administered questionnaires, was where participants were asked to complete the questionnaire themselves.

The second survey method was where the researcher distributed the questionnaire in face to face encounters. Lastly, the questionnaire delivered by means of the telephone was identified as a viable method utilized by researchers (Babbie, 2007). An electronic method of survey distribution was adopted by this research. Survey Monkey was utilized to administer and collect data. Survey Monkey was identified as an on-line research company which provided a service which allows researcher to maintain anonymity.

A survey was distributed by electronic mail, to all disability services coordinators within the MUS system. Personal phone calls to disability coordinators was made prior to distribution. Survey clarification was performed on an as needed basis via electronically

and by phone. Additional follow-up letters to all MUS disability coordinators and participants were sent two weeks after initial survey distribution.

Since the researcher did not know the names of the participants or any other personal information, the follow-up letter was set up electronically in order to maintain anonymity. According to Babbie (2007) follow-up mailings spur a resurgence of returns and two follow-ups were suggested. Included in the follow-up mailings, an additional copy of the survey questionnaire was distributed. Receiving a follow-up letter may have encouraged the participants to look for the original and provided an effective method for increasing return rates in mail surveys (Babbie, 2007). The follow-up letter generated seven more responses. The researcher also re-sent the entire package of letters and instructions with a modified survey which included the voluntary submittal of GPA. The second surge of survey distribution resulted in an increase of ten respondents.

All surveys were distributed electronically to gatekeepers who then provide the Survey Monkey website link. Copies of the survey were distributed electronically to each disabilities coordinator with a full explanation of the purpose and how the results were to be used. Enclosed with each survey mailed to the disabilities coordinators was a full set of directions for performing the surveys. The directions, survey and letters to students and gatekeepers was mailed both electronically and traditionally through the U.S. postal system.

The survey questions used in this study consisted of questions based on the review of literature. Specifically, the survey was selected from Kosine's (2006) study and permission to use the survey and modify for the purposes of this research was obtained, see Appendix H. The Cronbach's alpha was conducted for reliability analysis

on the Self Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ). The result was a level of .73. Nunnally (1978, p 245) recommended that instruments used in basic research have reliability of .70 or better. He added that "increasing reliability much beyond 80 was a waste of time with instruments used for basic research". Nunnally (1978) further explained the difference between basic research stating that if the results are going to have a direct impact on the fate of the individuals based on the test scores then higher reliability was needed. Since this was not the case, an alpha level of .70 or greater was established as meeting reliability criteria. The SAQ developed by Kosine (2006) consisted of three subscales. Research cited by Kosine (2006), indicated these subscales or characteristics were important factors in self-advocacy. The characteristics or subscales identified by Kosine (2006) and many authors in the review of literature were: (a) self-determination, (b) confidence, and (c) help seeking. The correlation coefficients were .64 .67, and .82 respectfully. The p-values for each was <.01, meeting significance requirements.

This study utilized a survey design because it provided a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2003). According to Babbie (2007), surveys are the preferred type of data collection procedure due to its design of being economical and having a rapid turnaround. Further, Babbie (2007) conveyed advantages of surveys as being able to identify attributes of large populations from a small group of individuals. The survey consisted of questions surrounding disability services, advocacy skills and transition. The survey was accompanied with the consent to participate form (Appendix D). Further, the survey conveyed instructions and the premises behind the research. According to Creswell (2003), field testing the survey was important for content validity

and to improve questions, format and scales. Since Kosine (2006) had previously field tested the instrument and it met content validity a pilot study was not necessary (Babbie, 2007).

Due to the sensitivity of studying individuals involving a sensitive population, permission needed to be granted from a human subjects review board prior to the proposed study (Creswell, 1998). The researcher presented the proposed research to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Montana and gained permission for the research prior to conducting any research. Researcher also gained permission from the Tribal Review Board prior to conducting any research.

Survey question rational. This study adopted the survey instrument in Appendix F based on the review of literature. The survey used in this study asked participants to rate their knowledge of accommodations, services and self-advocacy to help understand and identify how GPA was affected by self-advocacy. Further, the first survey question (Were you on an IEP in high school?) was designed to voluntarily select participants that best helped the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2003). With the notion of selecting participants for this research, participants voluntarily self-identified as having an IEP in high school and are 18 or older, were used for data analysis. In order to study the paradigm of missing skills or services in the preparation for self-advocacy, participants who experienced this phenomenon needed to be voluntarily selected for the research process (Creswell, 2003). To voluntarily select participants for the research, the survey also served as a means of selection. Only participants who responded with a yes on question one in the survey were utilized in the data analysis.

Quantitative data analysis. A survey design provided a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2003). From the sample results, the researcher could generalize or make claims about the population (Babbie, 2007; Creswell, 2003). Unfortunately, the response rate in this research did not allow for the results to be generalized.

Nonrespondents. According to Creswell (2003), analyzing quantitative data should be presented in a series of five steps. The five steps presented by Creswell (2003), included first reporting information regarding the number of participants in the sample who did and did not return the survey. Creswell (2003) suggested a table with numbers and percentages describing respondents and non-respondents as a useful tool for presenting any bias information.

Response bias. The second step outlined by Creswell (2003), is checking for response bias. Response bias was defined as the effect of non-responses on survey estimates substantially changing the overall results of the survey (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2003) offered two distinct procedures used to check for response bias. The first was wave analysis; the second was respondent/non-respondent analysis. In wave analysis the researcher examined returns on select items week by week to determine if average responses changed. If the responses of the non-respondents began to change, a potential existed for response bias (Creswell, 2003). This research utilized the second method proposed by Creswell (2003) for bias response checking. This researcher employed wave analysis check for response bias by examining returns week by week checking for changes. No changes existed in the survey responses. According to Creswell (2003), this method constituted a check for response bias.

Variables. The third step "contained a plan to provide descriptive analysis of data for all independent and dependent variables in the study. This analysis indicated the means, standard deviations, mode, and range of scores for these variables" (Creswell, 2003). Variables are logical groupings of attributes (Babbie, 2007). Attributes are characteristics or qualities that described an object (Babbie, 2007). In this study, student advocacy skills were the independent variables and Freshman GPA was considered the dependent variable. For the purpose of this research, question 28 (Rate your self-advocacy skills) was treated as an independent variable relative to question 26 (freshmen GPA) but it was treated as a dependent variable relative to the other questions. The dependent variable was the response or the criterion variable that was presumed to be caused by or influenced by the independent treatment conditions (Creswell, 2003). Utilizing a table to relate variables helped readers determine how the researcher used survey items (Creswell, 2003). Below in table two is a chart in order to see how the variables were cross-referenced with questions and specific survey items.

Table 2: Cross-reference Questions with Survey Responses

Variable Name	Survey Questions	Item on Survey
Independent Variable Self-Advocacy Skills	Descriptive research question # 28 Rate your self-advocacy skills	See Questions: 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,12,28
Dependent Variable First Semester Freshman GPA. Self-Advocacy Skills	Descriptive research question # 26. First Semester Freshman GPA 28. Rate your self-advocacy skills	See Questions: 26, 28

Statistical procedure. The fourth step addressed by Creswell (2003) was identifying the statistical procedure for combining items into scales. Further, Creswell (2003) noted researchers should mention reliability checks for the internal consistency of the scales. Scales were defined as a type of composite measure composed of several items that have a logical structure among them (Babbie, 2007). Scales were efficient devices for data analysis because they allowed researchers to summarize several indicators in a single numerical score, while maintaining the specific details of all the individual indicators (Babbie, 2007). Further, several data items could give researchers a more comprehensive and accurate indication of the variable being researched (Babbie, 2007). Researchers constructed scales by assigning scores to patterns of responses, recognizing that some items reflected a relatively weak degree of the variable while others were stronger (Babbie, 2007).

Statistical rationale. Finally, the fifth step in analyzing quantitative data were identifying the statistics and the statistical computer programs for testing the major questions in the proposed study (Creswell, 2003). This step included providing a rationale for the choice of statistical test and mention the assumptions associated with the statistic (Creswell, 2003). This research was formulated by utilizing quantitative strategies where this study explored by means of a survey if self-advocacy and college freshmen GPA relate. Once the research was conducted, a note of the measurement of variables and the type of distribution of scores (normal, non-normal) affecting the choice of statistical test were made. The Spearman Rho was utilized for data analysis due the data being ordinal in format (Babbie, 2007). The premises behind utilizing the Spearman Rho was because the variables were transformed into rank orders. The rank orders were

assigned to the participants responses on the survey. Rankings to the question asking respondents to rate their self-advocacy skills was given rank orders from one through four with poor being one and above average being four. The response strongly disagreed to strongly agree were given rank orders from one through five respectively. The responses freshmen through senior was also given rank orders from one through four with senior having the highest rank order. The final responses to GPA was given rank orders from one through six with a GPA of 0 to 1.0 starting at one. Transforming the interval level variables into rank orders or ordinal data had a strong effect on outliers and linearized the relationships (Babbie, 2007).

Once the Spearman Rho was implemented, multiple regression analysis was conducted because it was found that both dependent variables used for data analysis were affected simultaneously by several independent variables. Multiple regression provided a means of analyzing situations where dependent variables were affected by several independent variables at the same time (Babbie, 2007).

Statistical significance. Creswell (2003) indicated quantitative research methods needed to consider the level of statistical significance for the study or alpha. For all statistical functions in this study alpha < or =.05. According to Babbie (2007), in the context of tests of statistical significance, the degree of likelihood that an observed, empirical relationship could be attributable to sampling error. A relationship was considered significant at the .05 level if the likelihood of its being only a function of sampling error was no greater than 5 out of 100 (Babbie, 2007). Based on research surrounding setting a statistical significance level, a level or P value was set at < or equal to .05 in order for the data to be considered statistically significant.

Spearman Rho was utilized to measure the magnitude and direction of the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The Spearman Rho determined and assigned the correlation coefficient with a number between +1 and -1. The magnitude was the strength of the correlation. The closer to correlation was to either +1 or -1, the stronger the correlation. If the correlation was zero or very close to zero, there was little association between the two variables (Archambault, 2000). The direction of the correlation designated how the two variables were related. If the correlation was positive, the two variables had a positive relationship (as one variable increased the other variable also increased). If the correlation was negative, the two variables had a negative relationship (Archambault, 2000).

Assumptions of the test. Multiple regression analysis was selected for this research primarily due to multiple regression analysis assumes a dependence or causal relationship between multiple independent variable and one dependent variable (Babbie, 2007). Multiple regression was used to identify the strength of the effect that the independent variables had on both of the dependent variables. Furthermore, the multiple regression allowed the identification of the strength of the dependent variable, rate your self-advocacy skills, had on the other dependent variable, GPA, when it was treated as an independent variable in the one instance.

Consent to participate. Creswell (1998) offered a comprehensive consent to participate form that outlined important information to be included in data collection procedures. Information contained within Creswell's example this research utilized included: a) participants right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, b) the central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in data collection, c) comments

about protecting the confidentiality of the respondents, d) a statement about known risks associated with participation in the study, e) the expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study, and f) a place for the participants and researcher to sign and date the form (Creswell, 1998). It was necessary to mask names of people, places and activities since this research studied a sensitive topic (Creswell, 2003). In the consent to participate form notation to confidentiality and anonymity were made. See Appendix D for full consent to participate form.

Gatekeepers. Creswell (1998) suggested gatekeepers needed full disclosure regarding the proposed research at their site. Gatekeepers for this research were defined as the Disabilities Services Coordinators at each institution of higher education. Gatekeepers received the required information about the performed research in writing. Creswell (1998) recommended conveying the following information to the gatekeepers: a) why the site was located, b) what would be done at the site during the research study? (Including time and resources required by the participants and amount of time to be spent at the site by the researcher), c) would the researcher's presence be disruptive, d) how would the results be reported, e) what would the gatekeeper gain from the study. See Appendix E for information about the study distributed to the gatekeepers.

Role of the researcher. The role of the researcher set the stage for discussion of issues involved in collection data (Creswell, 2003). Potential issues researcher predicted with this study related to ethical situations surrounding accessing a population where confidentiality and anonymity were stringently controlled. Researcher maintained responder anonymity by purchasing an electronic web-based account where responders'

personal information were not shown, in fact, the researcher did not have access to any personal information including names.

Summary of Chapter Three

The strategies of inquiry used in this research involved collecting and analyzing quantitative forms of data. This research design collected quantitative data in the form of a survey. The survey consisted of 28 total questions and was modified from Kosine's (2006) Self Advocacy Questionnaire. Kosine's (2006) SAQ was previously field tested and the instrument met content validity. The modifications to Kosine's questionnaire was the inclusion of four additional questions. The first modified question asked participants if they were on an IEP in high school. The second modified question asked the participants how many years they were on an IEP in high school. The third additional question asked participants what their current age was. The fourth additional question asked the participants what year in school they were in.

The sample for this research was drawn from students of the 14 public two and four-year institutions of higher education currently within the Montana University System (MUS). The sample also included three community colleges and the seven tribal colleges within the State of Montana.

In this study, student advocacy skills were the independent variables and Freshman GPA was considered the dependent variable. For the purpose of this research, question 28 (Rate your self-advocacy skills) was treated as an independent variable relative to question 26 (freshmen GPA) but it was treated as a dependent variable relative to the other questions.

For all statistical functions in this study alpha =.05. Spearman Rho was utilized to measure the magnitude and direction of the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The Spearman Rho determined and assigned the correlation coefficient with a number between +1 and -1. Multiple regression analysis was used to identify the strength of the effect that the independent variables had on both of the dependent variables.

This research design utilized the disabilities services coordinators or directors from each institution in the MUS and these individuals were considered the gatekeepers. The gatekeepers distributed the Survey Monkey electronic link to the voluntary participants. The participants were asked to voluntarily submit their email address in survey question 27 for an I-pod drawing. Once the I-pod drawing commenced, all email addresses and personal information was destroyed.

Chapter Four

Results

The fundamental purpose of this research study was to determine the interactions between components of self-advocacy skills and Freshman GPA. Self-advocacy skills was defined as an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involved making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (Boyer-Stephens, Corbey, Jones, West, 1999). Further analysis of advocacy skills was provided by Dorwick and Stodden (2001) and Stodden et al., (2003). The authors felt self-advocacy skills included: (a) students taking the initiative to declare their status as a person with disabilities, (b) provide assessment data verifying their specific disability and how to accommodate it, (c) working with support services to plan accommodations.

This research study employed a survey design utilizing a modified version of Kosines' (2009) Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ). The modifications to Kosine's SAQ included four extra questions asking for participants to self-report their freshmen GPA, if they were on an IEP in high school, age, and information regarding an I-pod drawing. The modified survey was administered by the on-line survey resource, Survey Monkey. The survey consisted of 28 questions surrounding disability services, advocacy skills and transition. Each post-secondary education institution's disability services coordinators or gatekeepers was contacted and given the survey location. A total of 52 respondents filled out the survey. As indicated earlier, only respondents indicating they were on IEP's in the secondary level was used for data analysis. 17 the 52 respondents indicated they were on IEP's in secondary education.

Complications. The only complications during the research involved the researcher making a couple mistakes on the survey instrument. The first mistake the researcher made was not including question 26 which asked participants to voluntarily submit their GPA. Yet another mistake on the survey instrument was on question 10 where the question asked participants if they inform their instructors of their learning disability. Instead this question should have read disability instead of learning disability.

Survey Monkey was utilized as a means of managing survey responses from participants. It was necessary to mask names of people, places and activities when studying a sensitive topic (Creswell, 2003). Survey Monkey served as a medium to maintain confidentiality and anonymity with all participants. Researcher also gained permission and followed procedures set forth by Institutional Review Board (IRB) from both the University of Montana and Tribal Colleges utilized in the research.

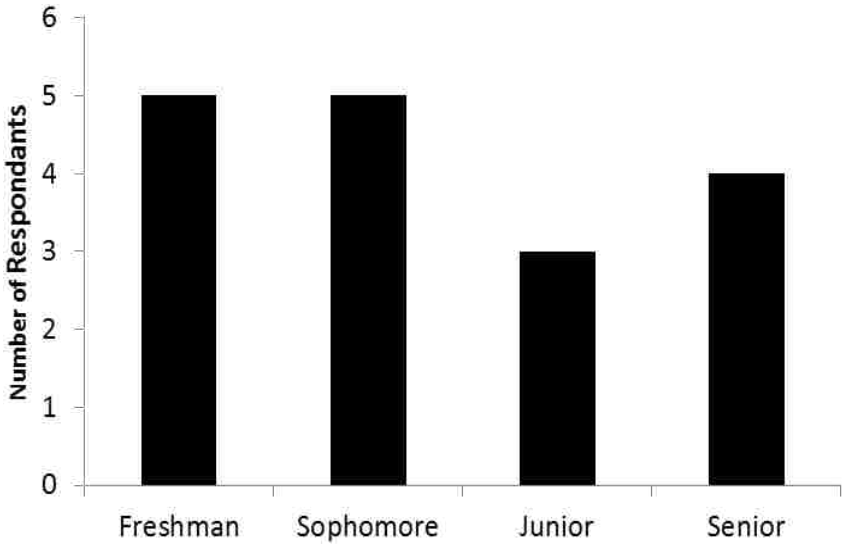
Survey question one. The first survey question asked if students were on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in high school. Of the 52 respondents, 17 answered question one with a yes, indicating they were on an IEP in high school. Question one was designed to voluntarily select participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Only the 17 participants answering with a yes on question one was used for data analysis.

Survey question two. The second survey question asked participants how many years they were on an IEP. The average years on an IEP for the respondents was 6.8 years with 2 being the shortest and 12 being the longest time frame. All respondents fulfilled the research model of requiring students to have been on an IEP for at least two years in high school.

Survey question three. Survey Question three asked the participants their current age. For the purposes of this research, only respondents over the age of 18 were used. All 17 of the participants used for data analysis self-reported to be over the age of 18.

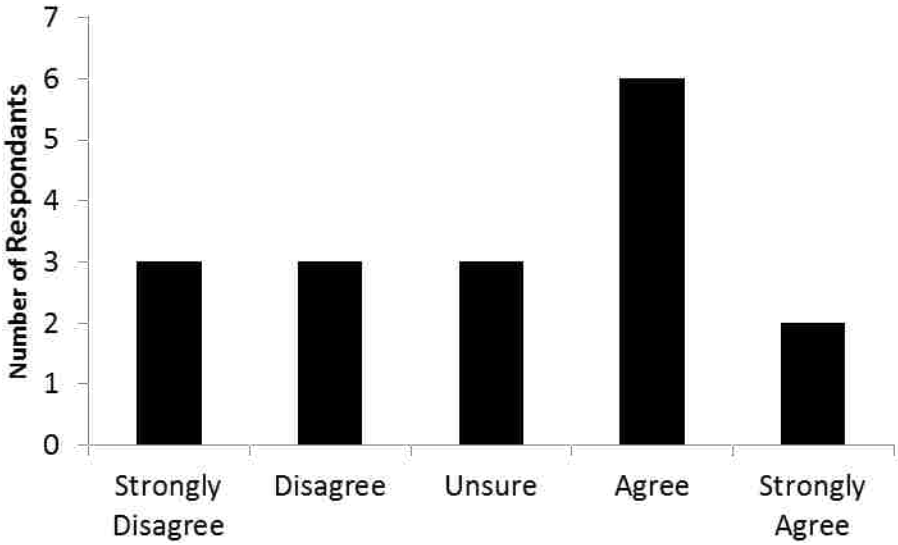
Survey question four. The fourth survey question asked participants what year in school they are in. The bar graph in Figure 1 illustrated the year in school of the 17 participants who completed the survey. Almost 60% of the participants were at the freshman and sophomore status at the time of the survey. In the fall of 2012 there was 18.2 million students registered for undergraduate studies in the United States (NCES, 2013). According to the National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES) (2013), United States public post-secondary institutions reported nearly eleven percent of their total student population had a disability. This eleven percent just took into account the participants which had satisfied the process of registering with disability services. According to the Office of Public Instruction (2014) in the reporting year 2012-2013 there was approximately 16,000 students in the State of Montana in secondary education with disabilities.

Figure 1. Survey question four; what year in school are you?



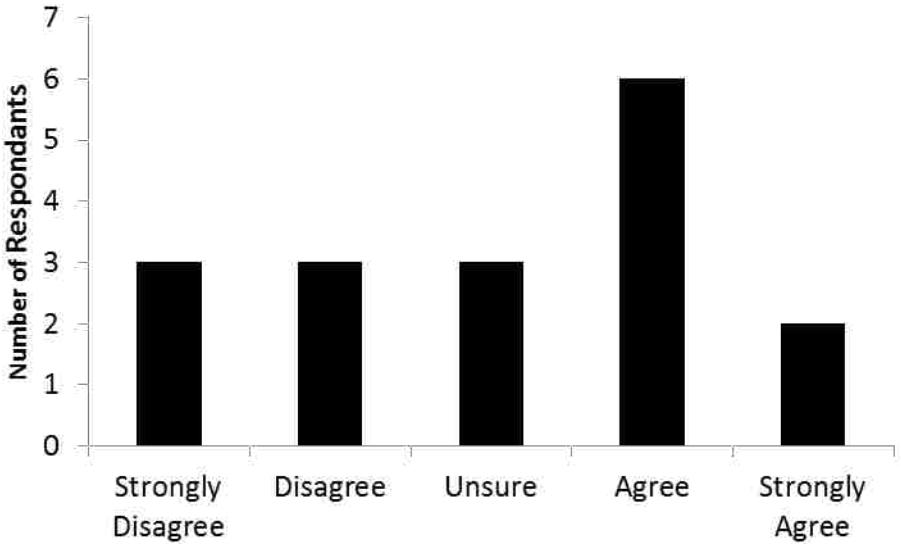
Survey question five. The fifth survey question asked the question if the participants typically recognize when they need help with their school work. 57 percent of the participants either agreed or strongly agree that they recognized when they needed help with their school work. The remaining 43 percent were either unsure, strongly disagreed, or disagreed that they recognized when they needed help with their school work.

Figure 2. Survey question five; I typically recognize when I need help with my schoolwork.



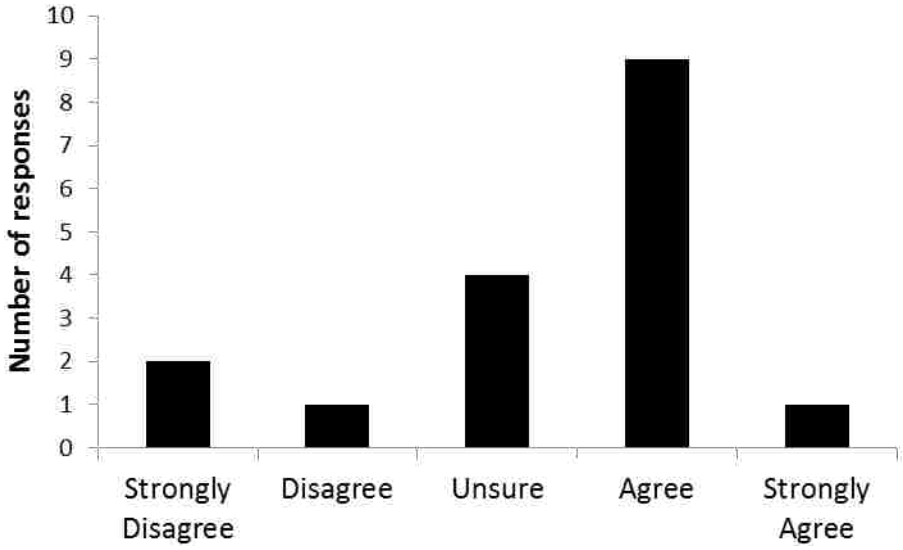
Survey question six. Survey question six asked participants if they were embarrassed when asking questions in class. In survey question six sixty five percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were embarrassed when asking questions in class.

Figure 3. Survey question six; I am embarrassed when asking questions in class.



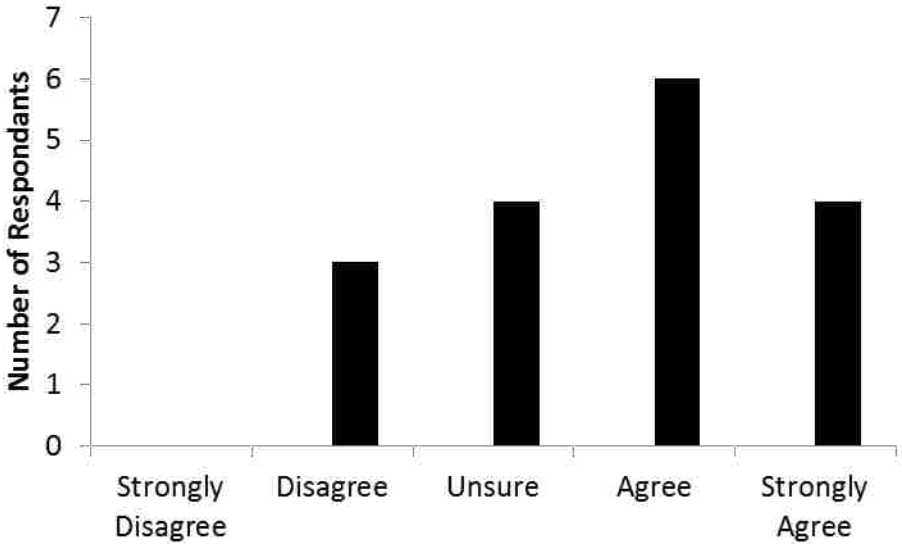
Survey question seven. Survey question seven asked participants with disabilities if they were aware of their educational rights in the college setting. Fifty three percent of participants who were on IEP's in the secondary setting agreed that they were aware of their educational rights in the college setting. Conversely, forty one percent strongly disagreed, disagreed or were unsure of their educational rights in the college setting.

Figure 4. Survey question seven; as a student with a disability, I am aware of my educational rights in the college setting?



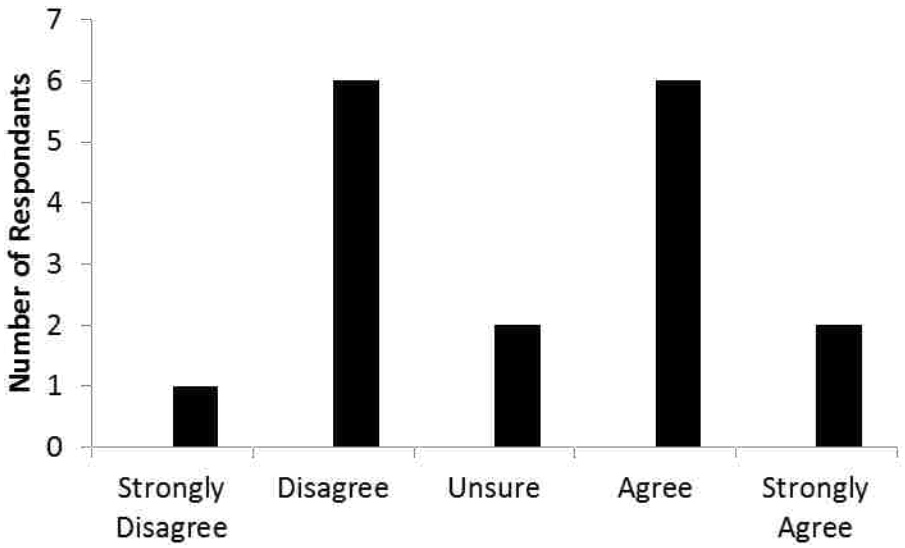
Survey question eight. Survey question eight asked participants if they liked to work in groups or with a partner. The results of survey question eight illustrated fifty seven percent of participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they liked to work in groups or with partners. Working in groups has been identified in previous research as a practice that promotes self-advocacy.

Figure 5. Survey question eight; I like to work in groups or with a partner.



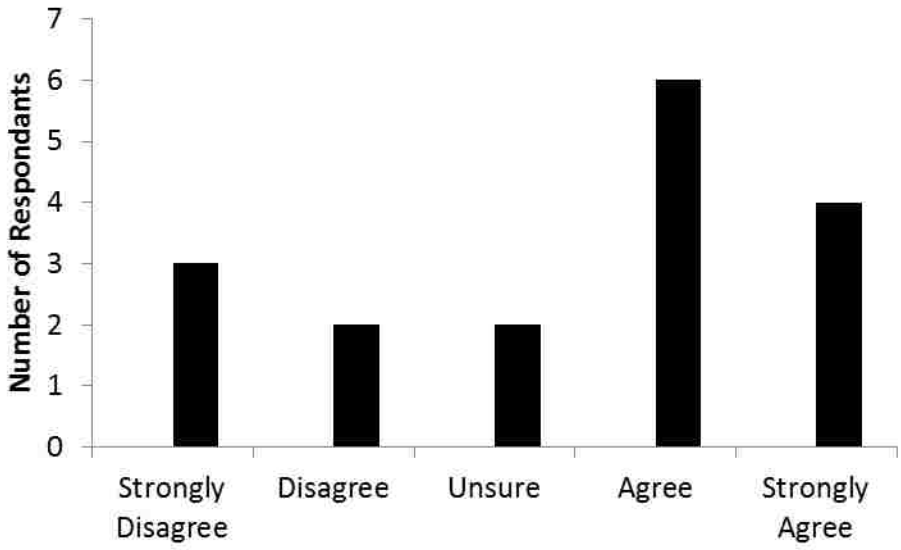
Survey question nine. Survey question nine asked participants how willing they are in asking their instructors for help with schoolwork. The results from question nine indicate that fifty three percent of the participants were willing to ask their instructors for help with their school work. Having the willingness to approach and ask instructors for help when it was needed was another example of questions categorized as self-advocacy skills according to Kosine's (2006) research and the SAQ.

Figure 6. Survey question nine; I am willing to ask my instructor for help with my schoolwork



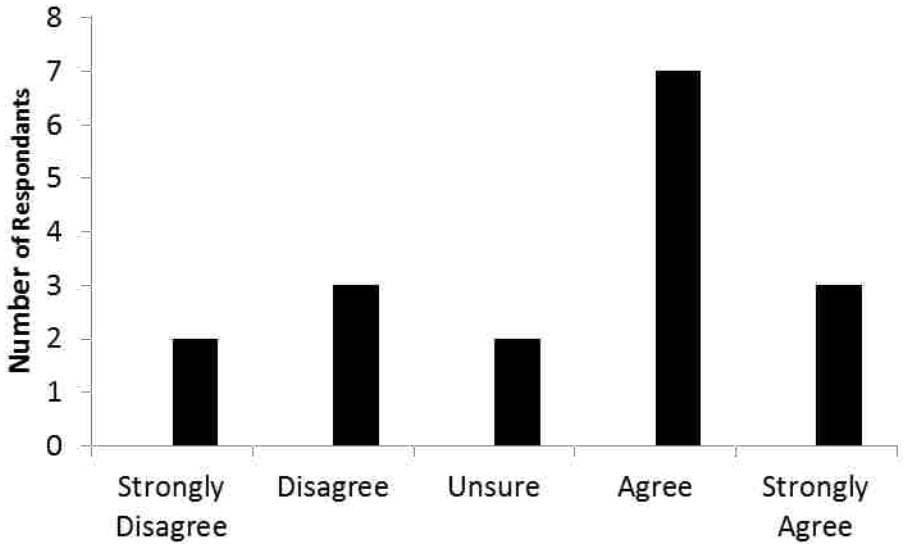
Survey question ten. Survey question ten asked participants if they inform their instructors of their learning disability. Survey question ten indicated fifty nine percent of respondents participating in this research survey did not have problems informing their instructors of their learning disability. The researcher made a mistake in the questionnaire and this question should have read disability instead of learning disability. Participants with a physical disability may have felt this question did not pertain to them. Regardless, a strong response toward being self- advocators existed based on the pure definition of self-advocacy.

Figure 7. Survey question ten; I inform my instructors about my learning disability.



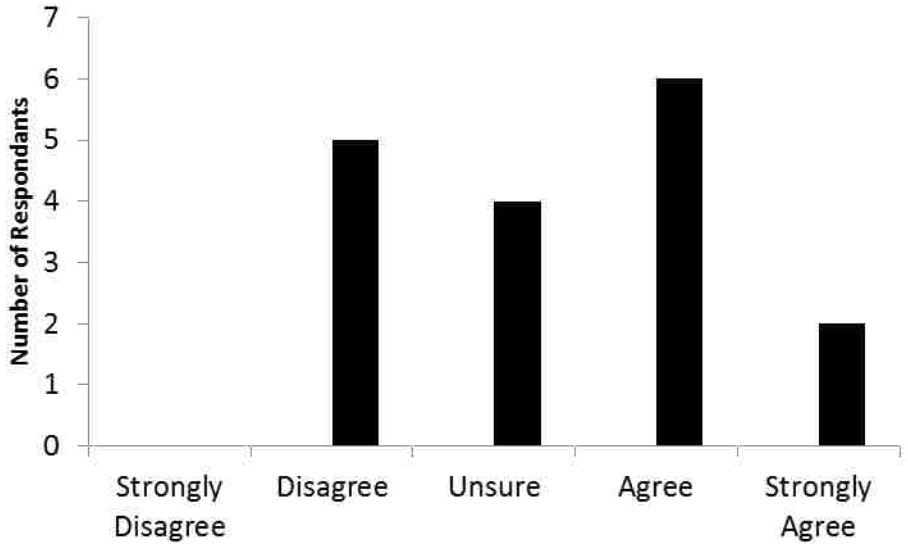
Survey question eleven. Survey question eleven asked participants if they were willing to seek tutoring services if they needed them. Survey question eleven illustrated that almost sixty percent of the participants who completed the survey were willing to seek tutoring services when they needed them. Seeking out tutoring services or services which will help you was a key component of self-advocacy skills according to the definition of self-advocacy skills provided by Wrightslaw (2012).

Figure 8. Survey question eleven; I am willing to seek tutoring services, if I need to.



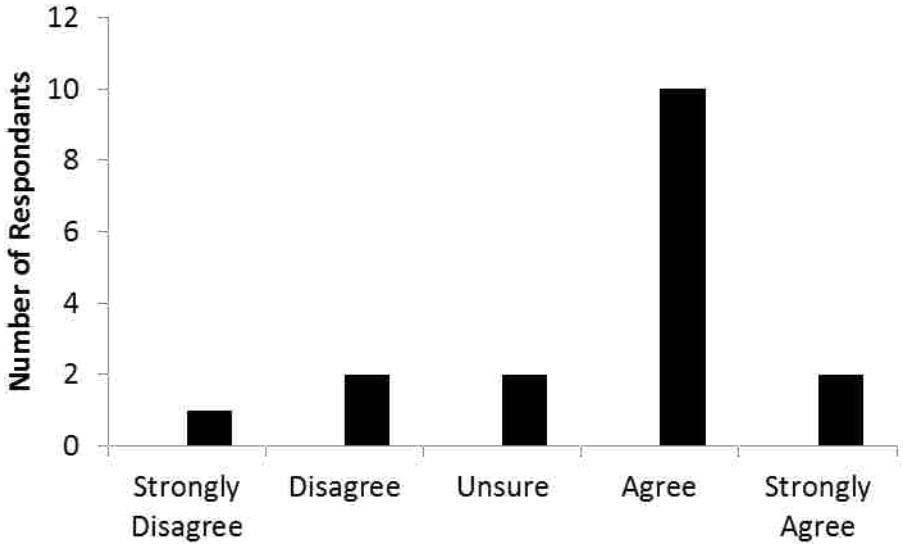
Survey question twelve. Survey question twelve asked participants if they were willing to ask questions in class. Survey question twelve illustrated thirty percent of the participants disagreed to their willingness to ask questions in class. Seventy percent of the participants were willing to ask questions in class. Twenty three participants reported that they were unsure if they were willing to ask questions in class. Survey question twelve was a strong indicator of self-advocacy skills as defined by Kosine's (2006) research.

Figure 9. Survey question twelve. I am willing to ask questions in class.



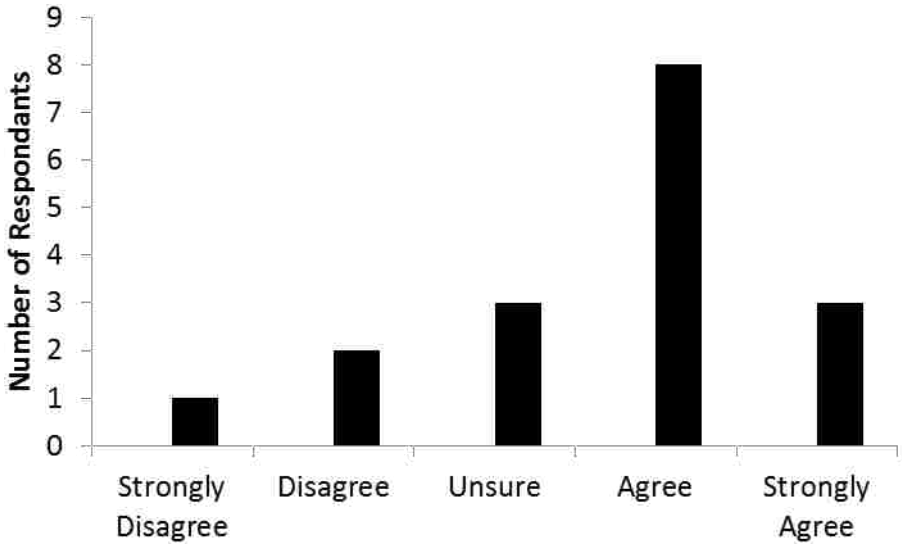
Survey question thirteen. Survey question thirteen asked participants if they were aware of the types of accommodations that can be made for them in the university setting. Approximately sixty percent of the participants in the survey agreed they were aware of the types of accommodations that can be made for them in the university setting. Comparing this survey question with survey question number eleven where sixty percent of the participants were willing to seek out tutoring services when they needed them, the data supported the notion that the same students who were aware of accommodations were also the ones who used them.

Figure 10. Survey question thirteen**;** I am aware of the types of accommodations that can be made for me within the university setting



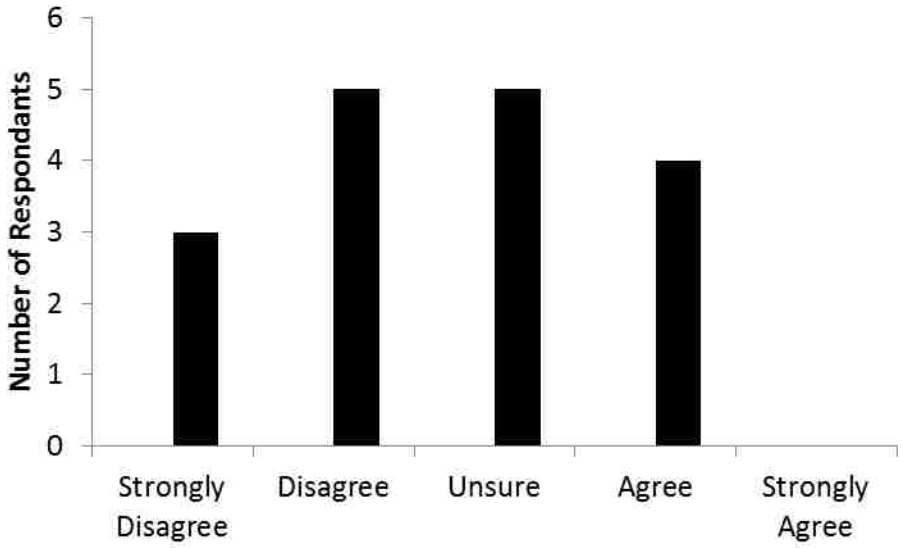
Survey question fourteen. Survey question fourteen asked participants if they were willing to access services from the disability services office on campus. Survey question fourteen results indicated nearly sixty five percent of respondents were willing to access services from the disability services office on campuses. Accessing disability services was a strong indicator of self-advocacy by Kosine's (2006) research results.

Figure 11. Survey question fourteen; I am willing to access services from the disability services office on campus.



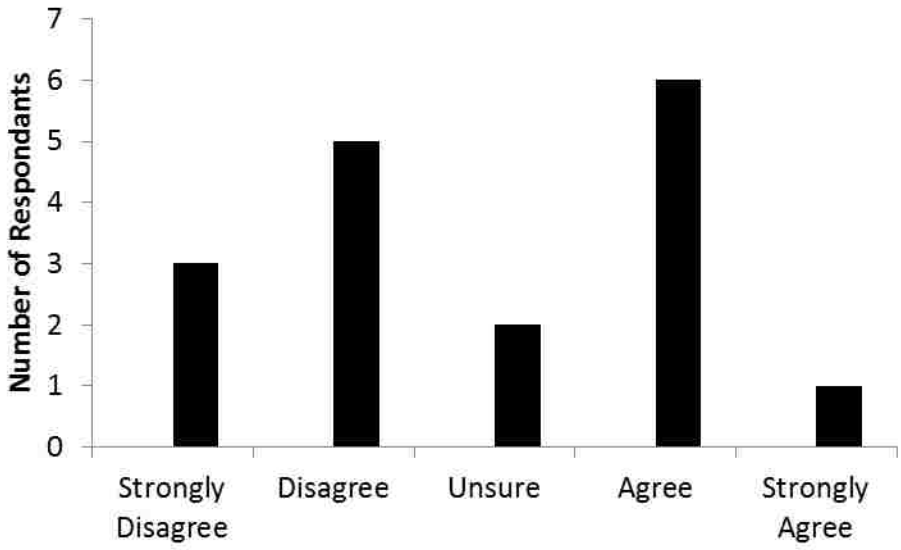
Survey question fifteen. Survey question fifteen asked participants if they afraid to talk in class discussions. Survey question fifteen results indicated only twenty three of the participants were afraid to talk in class discussions as illustrated by eight participants stating they either strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were afraid to talk in class discussions.

Figure 12. Survey question fifteen; I am afraid to talk in class discussions.



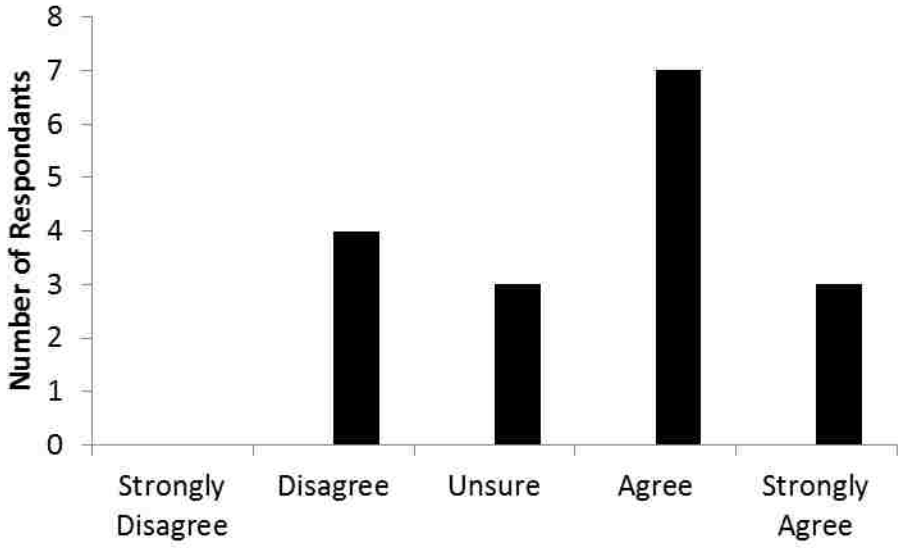
Survey question sixteen. Survey question sixteen asked participants if they felt comfortable talking to their instructors about their disabilities. The results of survey question sixteen indicated many participants did feel uncomfortable talking to their instructors about their disabilities. Roughly fifty percent of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed about being comfortable talking to their instructors about their disability.

Figure 13. Survey question sixteen; I feel comfortable talking to my instructors about my disability.



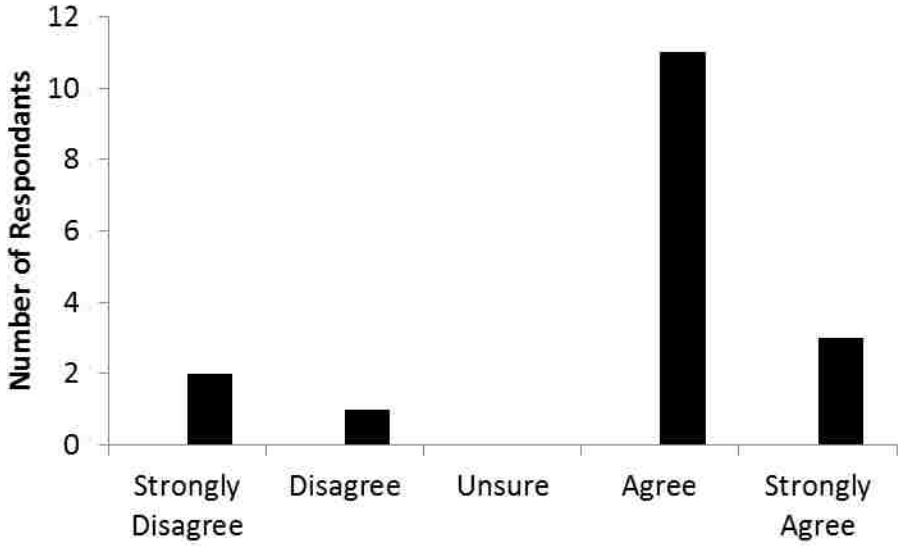
Survey question seventeen. Survey question seventeen asked participants if throughout high school they worked independently, despite their learning disability**.** The results of question seventeen indicated fifty nine percent of the respondents participating in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed they worked independently throughout high school despite their disability.

Figure 14. Survey question seventeen; throughout high school I worked independently, despite my learning disability.



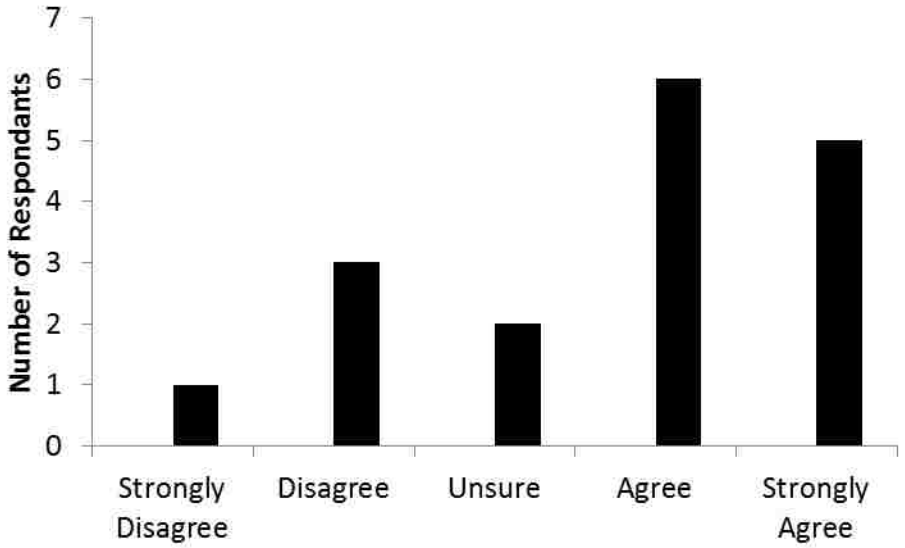
Survey question eighteen. Survey question eighteen asked participants if they typically did their homework without assistance. The results of survey question eighteen indicated eighty two percent of students that participated in the survey typically performed all of their homework without assistance.

Figure 15. Survey question eighteen; I typically do all of my school work without assistance.



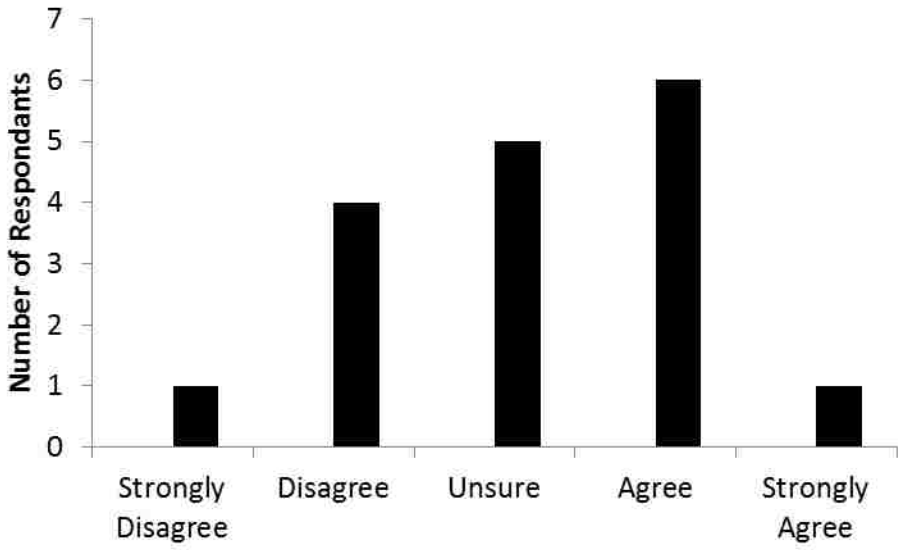
Survey question nineteen. Survey question nineteen asked participants if it bothered them to ask for academic help if they needed it. The results of survey question nineteen indicated sixty five percent of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that it bothered them to ask for academic help if they needed it.

Figure 16. Survey question nineteen; It bothers me to ask for academic help if I need it.



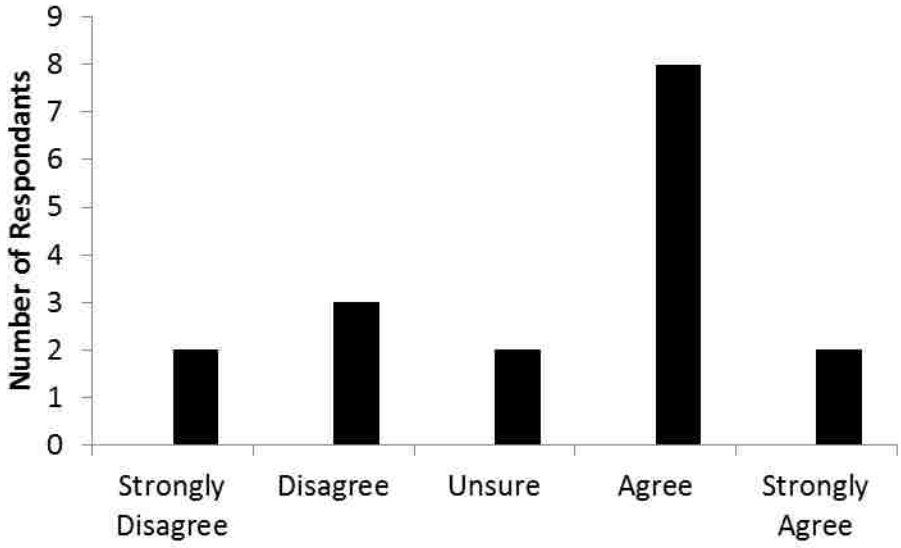
Survey question twenty. Survey question twenty asked participants if when they encounter a problem that they cannot immediately solve, they keep going until they find a way to solve it. The results of question twenty indicated fifty nine percent of the research participants responded in the categories of strongly disagree, disagree or where unsure.

Figure 17. Suvey question twenty; when I encounter a problem that I cannot immediately solve, I keep going until I find a way to solve it.



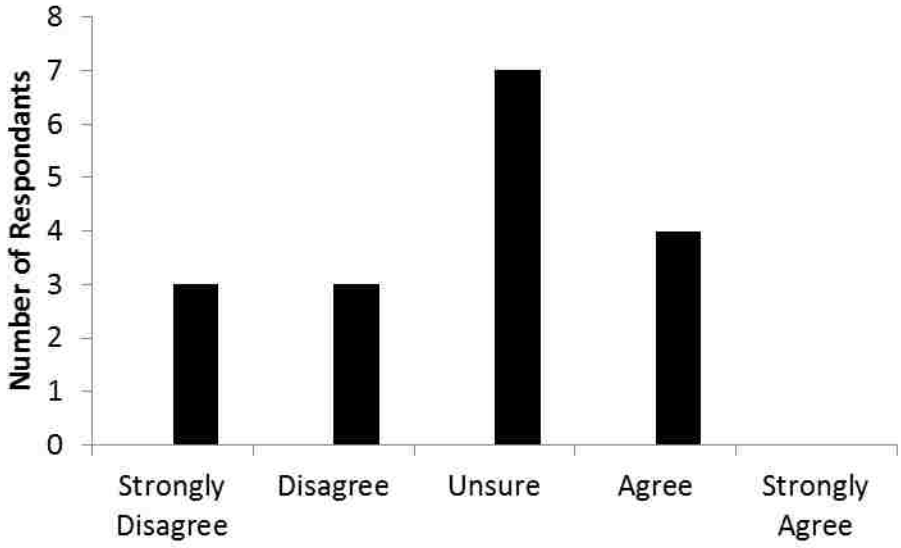
Survey question twenty one. Survey question twenty one asked participants if they like to have a lot of guidance with their school work. Figure 18 indicated fifty nine percent of the respondents participating in the survey prefered to have a lot of guidance with their school work.

Figure 18. Survey question twenty one; I like to have a lot of guidance with my school work.



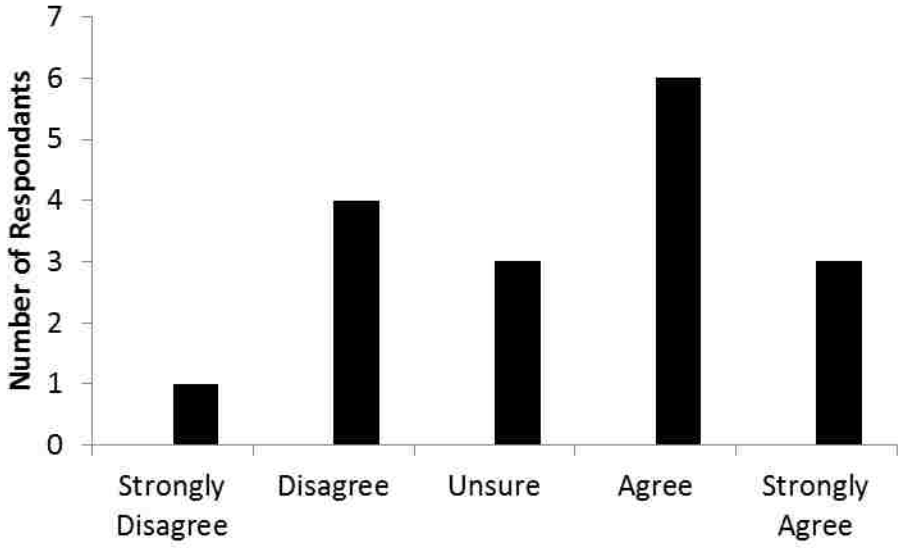
Survey question twenty two. Survey question twenty two indicated seventy six percent of respondents who participated in the survey anticipated having problems handling the work in their courses or were unsure. When results of survey question four was analyzed, it became apparent fifty nine percent of the participants were either in their first or second year of post-secondary education and may have had anxiety and uncertainty of their remaining education.

Figure 19. Survey question twenty two; I do not anticipate having too many problems handling the work in my courses.



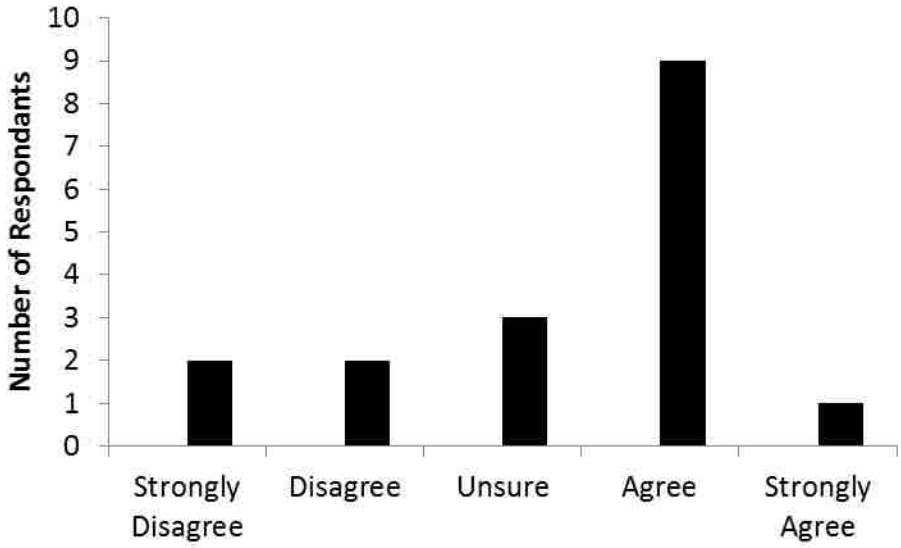
Survey question twenty three. Survey question twenty three asked participants if they find it difficulty talking with people that they do not know. Survey question twenty three indicated fifty three percent of partipants in the research survey either agreed or stongly agreed that they found it difficult talking with people they did not know.

Figure 20. Survey question twenty three; I find it difficult talking with people that I do not know.



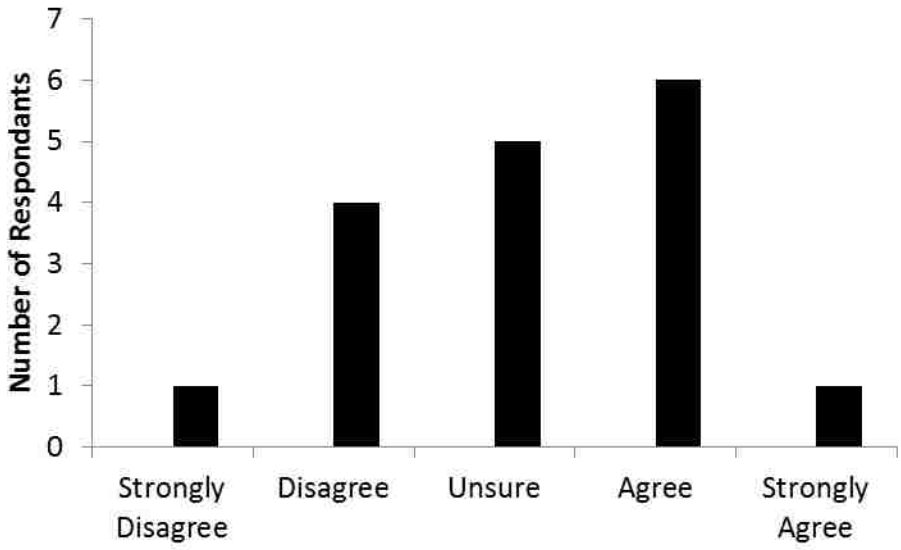
Survey question twenty four. Survey question twenty four asked participants regarding having confidence in their academic skills. Survey question twenty four was noted in Kosine's (2006) research as being catagorized as an indicator of self-advocacy. Survey question twenty four results indicated fifty nine percent of participants in this survey had confidence in their academic skills. Wehmeyer (2002) found students who learned to self-advocate developed confidence and were more willing to risk failure at an activity and ultimately gain the skills necessary for independence and success.

Figure 21. Survey question twenty four; I have confidence in my academic skills.



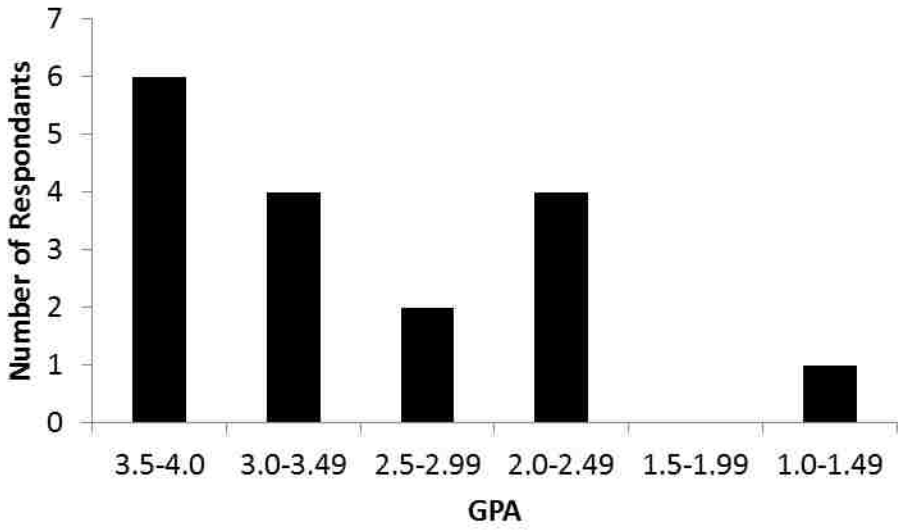
Survey question twenty five. Survey question twenty five asked participants if they felt comfortable interacting with other students in their class. The results of survey question twenty five indicated that forty one percent of participants felt comfortable interacting with other students in their class. The results of survey question twenty five indicated fifty nine percent of participants either strongly disagreed, disagreed or are unsure if they were comfortable interacting with other students in their classes.

Figure 22. Survey question twenty five; I feel comfortable interacting with other students in my class.



Survey question twenty six. Survey question twenty six asked respondents to self-report their first semester Freshman GPA. Survey question twenty six was utilized in this research as one of the dependent variables in the multiple regression analysis. The multiple regression analysis indicated the best predictor of GPA was survey question eight. Survey question eight asked participants if they liked working in groups or with a partner. The results of survey question twenty six displayed data indicating the majority of respondents participating in the research survey have GPA's of 2.0 and greater. Figure 23 indicated that fifty nine percent of the participants included in this research have GPA's 3.0 and higher. Actual GPA's were not reported, rather the ranges indicated below were the actual response selections available on the survey.

Figure 23. Survey question twenty six; What was your first semester Freshman GPA?

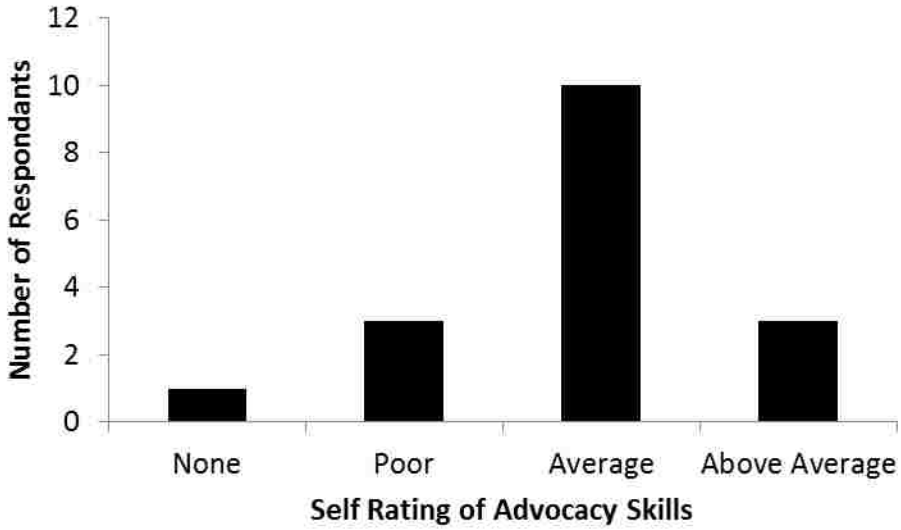


Survey question twenty seven. Survey Question twenty seven asked participants to voluntarily offer their e-mail addresses to be considered for the drawing for an I-pod. The results of survey question twenty seven were not used or interpreted for research results. Once the drawing for the I-pod commenced and winning participant notified, the results for question twenty seven and all other personal information was destroyed by the researcher.

Survey question twenty eight. Survey question twenty eight asked participants to rate their self-Advocacy skills. Figure 24 indicated the results of survey question twenty eight showed that eighty two percent of participants indicated they have either average or above average self-reported, self-advocacy skills. The results of survey question twenty eight displayed by figure 24, indicated a majority of survey participants self-rated their advocacy skills to be average and above. Survey question twenty eight was treated as an independent variable relative to question twenty six (freshmen GPA)

but it was treated as a dependent variable relative to the other survey questions. The multiple regression analysis indicated question twenty one as the best predictor with a correlation coefficient of .444 for participants' response on rating their self-advocacy skills. Question twenty asked participants if they liked having a lot of guidance on their homework.

Figure 24. Survey question twenty eight; please rate your self-advocacy skills.



Correlations

Analyzing the results of the first dependent variable (Survey Question twenty six-self reported GPA) revealed questions 8, 15, 10, 21 and 9 as best predictors in participants' GPA. Survey question twenty six asked participants to self-report their Freshman GPA in order to gain data related to self-advocacy and GPA. Question eight asked participants if they liked working in groups or with partners, 59% responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that they like working in groups or with partners. The multiple regression analysis indicated a strong correlation coefficient of .374. The next strongest indicator for GPA was question fifteen. Survey question fifteen asked

participants if they were afraid to talk in class discussions. The multiple regression analysis indicated a strong importance with a correlation coefficient of .335. Survey question ten also showed statistical significance with participants' GPA. Survey question ten asked participants if they informed their instructors about their learning disabilities. Forty one percent of the participants strongly disagreed, disagreed or were unsure regarding informing instructors about their learning disabilities. Survey question twenty one was the next best predictor in the participants' GPA. Survey question twenty one asked students if they liked having a lot of guidance with their school work. The correlation coefficient of survey question twenty one was .153. Lastly question nine showed some correlation to the dependent variable, GPA. Survey question nine asked students if they were willing to ask their instructors for help with school work. The correlation coefficient for survey question nine was .027.

Analyzing the results of survey question twenty eight (rate your self-advocacy skills), results indicated best predictors in questions 21, 9, 24, 19 and 13. Survey question twenty one indicated the best predictor of self-advocacy skills. Survey question twenty one asked participants if they liked having a lot of guidance with their school work. As described above, survey question twenty one also showed significance in participants' freshman GPA. Question twenty one showed the highest correlation coefficient for self-advocacy skills at .444. The next highest question showing predictability of self-advocacy skills is survey question nine. Survey question nine asked participants if they were willing to as their instructors for help with schoolwork. Correlation coefficient for survey question nine in relation to dependent variable self-advocacy skills was .330. The next survey question showing predictability, however

lower, was survey question twenty four. Survey question twenty four asked participants if they have confidence in their academic skills. The correlation coefficient for survey question twenty four was .095. Survey question nineteen showed predictability in self-advocacy skills. Survey question nineteen asked participants if it bothered them to ask for academic help, if they need it. Correlation coefficient for survey question nineteen came in at .083. Lastly, survey question thirteen displayed statistical significance with a correlation coefficient of .047. Survey question thirteen asked participants if they were aware of the types of accommodations that can be made for them within the university setting.

Reliability

Reliability was concerned with the ability of an instrument to measure consistently (Dennick & Tavakol, 2011). According to Dennick & Tavakol (2011), it was possible to objectively measure the reliability of an instrument with the widely used Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach alpha was used with SPSS to provide a measure of the internal consistency of the survey. The Cronbach alpha was expressed as a number between 0 and 1. According to Dennick & Tavakol (2011), an instrument should be at the .70 level before it was considered to be internally consistent. Internal consistency described the extent to which all the items in a test measured the same concept or construct (Dennick & Tavakol, 2011). The Cronbach alpha analyzed the sample of 17 in this research and the result was an alpha of .72.

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis utilized for this research was that there was no relationship between self-advocacy skills and college first semester GPA. The null hypothesis

utilized in this research was rejected on the premises of correlations between independent variables and the dependent variables was found. Specifically, it was found that the independent variable self-advocacy skills had an impact on the dependent variable, college freshmen first semester GPA. For all statistical functions in this study alpha =.05. Spearman Rho was utilized to measure the magnitude and direction of the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The Spearman Rho determined and assigned the correlation coefficient with a number between +1 and -1. SPSS data analysis program was utilized to find correlations between variables. Correlations with the dependent variable, GPA, and independent variables, self-advocacy skills, was obtained through questions 8, 15, 10, and 21 met the level of significance previously established as statistically significant. Correlations with self-advocacy skills being the dependent variable was met through questions 21, 9, 24, and 19 which met the level of significance as previously established as statistically significant. Since the measured associations in the above mentioned variables were statistically significant at the .05 level and above, the researcher regarded a genuine association between the variables (Babbie, 2007). Table 3 below displayed the magnitude and direction of the association between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

Hypotheses paradigm was used in this research as estimates of a populations' values based on the data collected from samples (Creswell, 2003). The testing of hypotheses employed statistical procedures in the form of SPSS and Spearman Rho combined with Excel. The investigator extracted inferences about the population of students with disabilities from the study sample (Creswell, 2003).

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Table

Target-Question 26 (Freshman First Semester GPA)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Correlation
Question 8 Transformed	10.244	1	10.244	215.720	0.374
Question 15 Transformed	9.174	1	9.174	193.194	0.335
Question 10 Transformed	4.189	1	4.189	88.223	0.153
Question 21Transformed	3.001	1	3.001	63.191	0.110
Question 9 Transformed	0.747	1	0.747	15.739	0.027

Target-Question 28 (Rate Your Self-Advocacy Skills)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Correlation
Question 21 Transformed	5.598	1	5.598	42.971	0.444
Question 9 Transformed	4.162	1	4.162	31.947	0.330
Question 24 Transformed	1.202	1	1.202	9.230	0.095
Question 19 Transformed	1.051	1	1.051	8.066	0.083
Question 13 Transformed	0.594	1	0.594	4.561	0.047

P Value was set at < or = .05

Summary of Chapter Four

This research examined the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA. Survey Monkey was utilized to administer the survey. A total of 52 respondents filled out the survey. Only respondents indicating they were on IEP's in the secondary level were used for data analysis. 17 the 52 respondents indicated they were on IEP's in secondary education and the 17 respondents were used for the data analysis as set forth in the population and sample section in chapter three.

Multiple regression analysis (SPSS) and Excel QI Macros were utilized for data analysis. Results of the data analysis indicated correlations with self-advocacy skills and first semester freshmen GPA for students with disabilities making the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Influences on first semester freshmen GPA were best predicted by questions 8 and 15. Survey question eight asked participants if they liked to work in groups or with a partner. Survey question 15 asked participants if they were afraid to talk in class discussions. Both questions 8 and 15 were considered self-advocacy based skills according to Kosine's (2009) SAQ.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This was a quantitative study that examined the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA. This study's research question was: What is the relationship between self-advocacy skills and college freshman first semester GPA. The purpose of this study was to determine the interactions between components of self-advocacy skills and Freshman GPA. The survey determined if college freshmen's GPA was related to self-advocacy skills. This study utilized Kosine's (2009) Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ) modified for the purpose of this research to include self-reported first semester college freshmen GPA.

Results of this research indicated correlations with self-advocacy skills and first semester freshmen GPA for students with disabilities making the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. These results supported the findings noted in previous research. Influences on first semester freshmen GPA were best predicted by questions 8 and 15. Survey question eight asked participants if they liked to work in groups or with a partner. Survey question 15 asked participants if they were afraid to talk in class discussions. Both questions 8 and 15 were classified as self-advocacy based skills according to Kosine's (2009) SAQ.

Self-advocacy skills were evaluated though the SPSS analysis, questions 21 and 9 were both identified as having strong (.444 and .330 respectively) correlation coefficients with self-advocacy skills. Survey question 21 asked participants if they liked having a lot of guidance with their school work. Survey question 9 asked participants if they were willing to ask their instructors for help with schoolwork. Self-advocacy has been defined

earlier as: (a) learning how to speak up for yourself; (b) making your own decisions about your own life; (c) learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you; (d) finding out who will support you in your journey; (e) knowing your rights and responsibilities; (f) problem solving; (g) listening and learning; (h) reaching out to others when you need help and friendship; and (i) learning about self-determination (Wrightslaw, 2012). Self-advocacy has been identified by essentially every notable researcher on the topic of transition as a key element for a successful transition. Through IDEA 1997, the U.S. Department of Education mandated that every school system establish a Transition Service entity within its special education organization. Such units were tasked with the responsibility of developing mechanisms that ensure students with disabilities were aware of all options available to them upon their departure, including matriculation to post-secondary institutions. Transition Services was previously defined by IDEA (1997) as:

> A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that a) was designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation b) was based upon the individual student's needs taking into account the student's preferences and interests c) included instruction related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (p. 13)

The 1997 amendments to IDEA stressed the importance of post-secondary educational opportunities versus vocational goals, and was the first legislation that specifically directed educators to consider post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

Previous research conducted by Kosine (2006) revealed a distinct connection between a person's ability to understand or have knowledge of their own cognition and successful academic outcomes. Self-determination was identified earlier as the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself (Kosine, 2006, Wehmeyer, 2002). Self-determination is based on the concepts of goal setting, planning and acquiring skills and knowledge (Wehmeyer, 2002). Kosine (2006) provided research measuring self-advocacy behaviors by assessing three areas. The three areas consisted of self-determination, confidence and help seeking behaviors. According the research conducted in this dissertation, all three areas used to measure self-advocacy also surfaced and contained .444 and .330 correlations to students' GPA. In short, students' freshman GPA was directly affected by their self-advocacy skills. According to the results of this research, the higher students' self-advocacy skills were the greater chances of a higher GPA the first semester in college.

Previous research indicated freshman retention rates have been poor. ACT (2012) indicated National retention rates in their research, as much as 33% of college students in the United States did not make it to the second year. This research indicated with increased self-advocacy skills, freshmen first semester GPA was positively affected. Previous research indicated confidence in academic abilities for students with disabilities leads to positive retention outcomes and overall college success. In previous research the

SAQ provided insight into some of the issues facing students with learning disabilities as they entered the post-secondary setting. The results of the SAQ in Kosine's (2006) research concluded that college freshmen with learning disabilities engaged in less self-advocacy behaviors, specifically help seeking behaviors, than did college freshmen without learning disabilities. Further, Kosine (2006) found the college freshmen in her study, possessed significantly less knowledge of how they learn, about their skill level, cognitive ability and about ways to correct learning errors in comparison with non-learning disabled freshmen. The result of this research currently presented was important due to understanding the importance of the relationship of self-advocacy skills and freshman first semester GPA for students with disabilities and how the results related to previous findings that identified successful self-advocacy skills.

Many students with disabilities have low beliefs in regards to their completion of academic goals and actions (McAllister, 2008). It was found to be important for educators and families to assist the individual with disabilities to see their academic strengths and set challenges in a more realistic fashion (McAllister, 2008). Further, the inclusion in general education classrooms led students with disabilities to believe that they would be capable of post-secondary education (McAllister, 2008). Understanding the concepts of self-advocacy and revealing the findings of this study would help professionals and families collaborating with individuals with disabilities, provide the variety of effective support. The results of this research addressed the correlation with self-advocacy skills and freshmen first semester GPA. This correlation supported the notion of stakeholders addressing self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities.

Previous research provided by Kosine (2009) indicated that if students would have had more knowledge of their disability and knowledge of their weaknesses prior to entering post-secondary education, that transition into post-secondary education and their subsequent adaptation into the post-secondary setting would have been less problematic. Kosine's (2009) findings supported the results from the research presented here and indicated the need for students to be aware of their learning strengths and weaknesses so they could engage in compensatory activities that would aid them in their academic success. Kosine's (2009) results supported all previous research which indicated the necessity of the inclusion of students in the IEP and transition processes. Further, increasing students' knowledge of self-determination, confidence and self-advocacy skills was found to be essential in positive transition experiences (Baer & Flexer, 2008). Baer and Flexer (2008) indicated four essential elements are required for successful transition programs. The four elements Baer and Flexer referred to were: (a) determining students' strengths, needs, interest and preferences; (b) results and outcome-oriented planning; (c) a coordinated set of activities; and (d) promoting movement to post-school activities. These four essential elements included a range of best practices in transition including person-centered planning, interagency collaboration, follow-up and follow along services and self-determination (Baer & Flexer, 2008).

The research presented in this study provided a number of ideas to support students with learning disabilities towards a goal of positive transition and post-secondary education. The evidence presented in this research supported the benefit of practices such as: (a) self-determination training (Kosine, 2009, McAllister, 2008, Stodden et al., 2003); (b) inclusion in general education programs (Lee et al., 2008,

IDEA, 2000,); (c) providing vocational training and preparation in high school (Lee et al., 2008); (d) social skills training and support (Baer & Flexer, 2008); and (e) transition planning that began in early high school, actively involved the student in the process, and led to informed and prepared students and families for the challenges and changes in environment that post-secondary education had (Getzel & Wehman, 2005, Stodden et al., 2003).

Implications for Leaders

Implications of this research for leaders are multifaceted. The results of this research was not only beneficial for leaders in the secondary setting, but also for leaders in the post-secondary arena. It was important for leaders in both mass systems of education be aware of the complications surrounding transition for students with disabilities. Educational leaders in both secondary and post-secondary not only needed to be aware of the complications associated with transition for students with disabilities, but also be privy of the services and skills available to stakeholders involved in a students' transition into post-secondary education.

Parents and the students themselves were also beneficiaries of the results of this research and may also have been considered leaders as well. It was well documented that the transference of responsibility from that of secondary education institution to the student occurred when entering the post-secondary setting when students with disabilities requested accommodations. The student at this pivotal point became his or her own leader by advocating for themselves. Assisting students self-advocate for their needs by all stakeholders was necessary for a smooth transition. Bennis & Slater (1999) best summed up qualities of leadership by noting leadership was not necessarily the exercise

of power, but rather the empowerment of others. Empowering students with disabilities could have been demonstrated from leaders in secondary, post-secondary and parents.

Implications for Further Research

The fundamental problem was that students with disabilities have traditionally been considered unsuited for post-secondary educational options; therefore, they have neither been encouraged nor prepared to attend colleges, trade and technical schools, or junior and community colleges. The 1997 amendments to IDEA mandated that secondary-level educators prepare special education students for such options if those individuals wished to attend post-secondary institutions after high school. Since the implementation of the 1997 amendments to IDEA and the adaptation of Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) in 2009, there was an influx of the participation of students with disabilities into post-secondary education (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). With the increased number of students with disabilities attending post-secondary educational opportunities, there have been discrepancies on how to prepare students for their post-secondary transition and ultimately their educational success.

The results of this research presented here had implications concerning self-advocacy skills and post-secondary freshman first semester GPA of students with disabilities. Specifically, the data analysis indicated self-advocacy skills have a direct correlation with college freshmen GPA in their first semester. This research was able to confirm a connection between self-advocacy skills and transition into post-secondary education for students with disabilities. In order to advocate for one's academic and learning needs, these should be a level of self-awareness to know what those academic

and learning needs were, which required self-advocacy and metacognitive skills (Kosine, 2006). Effective transition was a cognitive skill that required planning and organization, this required a self-awareness of what one's own transition needs were. In addition, effective transition planning necessitated that one be willing to engage in self-advocacy skills which was stated in Kosine's (2006) research, required metacognitive awareness to determine academic needs.

Transition planning was found by many seminal authors to be an effective tool for aiding students with disabilities to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. Many students with disabilities had limited self-advocacy skills, self-awareness and confidence; they were therefore limited in their ability to effectively engage in transition planning. Additional research is needed in the current efforts of secondary and post-secondary institutions in transition planning.

Montana adopted the practice of starting transition planning at age 16 and be documented in a student's IEP. Should transition planning have happened earlier? What is appropriate or successful transition planning? Further, this research presented involved participants who participated in the IEP process in high school. Future research should also include participants who were both involved in the IEP process and Section 504 plans. If a student was considered disabled under Section 504 school districts must have created 504 plans. If the student with disabilities was also eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) then in most cases the IEP took place of the Section 504 plan (National Center on Learning Disabilities (NCLD), 2014) As a general rule, if a student was eligible for services under IDEA or an IEP, then they qualified for Section 504. Conversely, due to the language contained in each law, not all

students with disabilities covered by Section 504 were considered automatically eligible for an IEP (NCLD, 2014). Section 504 definitions of a disability were much broader than IDEA, and this research may have missed some respondents due to the definitions and differences of IDEA and Section 504 of the ADA. In short, the IDEA law required students with disabilities to meet one of the thirteen disabilities listed in their definitions and as a result of the disability, the student needed special education to make progress in school in order to benefit from the general education program (NCLD, 2014). This two prong approach at defining students with disabilities under IDEA may have narrowed the number of respondents for this research. Section 504 definition of a disability stated if the disability substantially limited a student with a disability in performing one or more major life activities (NCLD, 2014).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2013) claimed school counselors work with students with disabilities both in special class settings and in the regular classroom and were key components in assisting with transition to post-secondary options. According to ASCA (2013), school counselors were a key component in assisting students with transitioning planning because they were often the gatekeepers of post-secondary education information and options. In spite of the school counselors' expertise in this area, studies showed that students with disabilities did not often meet with their school counselors to discuss post-secondary options or receive transition services.

IDEA has set the tone, mandating the inclusion of students with disabilities in transition activities, conversely, efforts should be increased to prepare students to both strive for and prepare for post-secondary educational options. These efforts should be

increased and take a more structured focus as students navigate up through the secondary setting. In addition, post-secondary education institutions need to play a larger role in reaching out to students in secondary educational systems to aid in the preparation process.

Post-secondary institutions at the very least should perform outreach programs to inform secondary students what is needed in order to receive appropriate accommodations for their disability in post-secondary institutions. Further research in obtaining or designing an appropriate and comprehensive outreach type of program for post-secondary education institutions is needed. This would not only be beneficial to the potential student, but also for the institution to be prepared to ensure appropriate accommodations are in place.

Some accommodations are very difficult to make in Montana due to limited resources. For example, accommodating a student with hearing impairments with an interpreter can sometimes be extremely difficult in Montana due to the limited number of qualified interpreters in the region. Further, with a sparse population of 6.7 persons per square mile (OPI, 2012) it is difficult for some students with disabilities to access the necessary qualified professionals needed to perform the recommendation of accommodation for the specific disability process. Lastly, post-secondary institutions need to support and promote self-advocacy skills. Additional research exploring post-secondary institutions reactions to self-advocacy skills and services is limited and opportunities for further research in this area are needed.

Conclusions

In closing, links between self-advocacy, GPA and transition for students with disabilities have been developed, but the research was limited. The next step is to determine if there is a connection between these constructs and the academic success of college students with disabilities. The goal of educational researchers, therefore, should be to develop evidence-based preparation and transition programs that are cohesive, comprehensive and promote retention at the post-secondary levels. Educational opportunities for students with disabilities are available, conversely, organized, interconnected and meaningful programs promoting access and preparation for academic success is insufficient.

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Appendix A

Comparison of Disability in High School and College

The University of Montana Disability Services for Students

Here is a point-by-point comparison of some services and accommodations and the ways in which they differ between high school and college.

High School	**College**
Under IDEA, children with disabilities are absolutely *entitled* to a "Free and Appropriate Public Education."	E*qual access* to education is the order of the day – no one is *entitled* to anything, but rather students have *civil rights* and they must advocate for themselves in order to enjoy those rights.
Section 504 in the public schools includes "Free and Appropriate Public Education" language, and accommodations may include a shortening of assignments, or the use of notes on tests, when other students cannot use them.	Section 504 is the first civil rights legislation that applied to colleges. It upholds the institution's right to maintain the academic standards, and no accommodations may be permitted to reduce that standard for any student. Thus there is no "free" education, and shortening assignments and using notes when other students do not are not considered "reasonable accommodations."
Plans, either the IEP or a 504 Plan, drove all services and accommodations, and involved the teachers, counselors, and absolutely required a parent's signature.	There is no plan, and instructors are not contacted, except by the student. In fact, parents may not receive even a student's grades without the student giving written permission.
"Placement" is determined by the child's "team," and outlined in the plan, and must, by law, be in the least restrictive environment.	Placement integration is assumed, and is the order of the day. We adjust the environment through accommodations, but we don't deliberate and select the environment for the student in advance.
Students were qualified for public education simply by being of the appropriate age, and because they had a disability.	"Otherwise qualified," in college, means that the student must meet all entrance and academic requirements, whether they receive accommodations or not.
Everybody knew about a student's placement, and practically everybody signed the plan. Each teacher would know about a student even before he or she entered the classroom, and have a good idea	DSS never contacts a professor without express permission from the student. Thus, the student must initiate all actions regarding accommodation with each professor, for each course, every semester. In addition, students

what the student's needs were.	have the civil right to *refuse* accommodations they don't need or want; and if they do not request an accommodation it is assumed they do not want it.
Public schools, for the most part, are responsible for appropriate assessment of a student's disability.	Higher education does not have to assess the student, but can expect that the student will provide proof of their disability within accepted guidelines.
Some subjects may have been waived for a student before graduation, if they were specifically related to the student's disability.	Substitutions for specific graduation requirements may be requested by following a rigorous petition process, but "waivers" for requirements are *never* granted. Substitutions are also granted typically after the student has *both* provided adequate verification to DSS of their disability *and* unsuccessfully attempted the courses in question with the appropriate accommodations recommended by DSS.
Labels are a way to categorize people.	Student has a right to disclose to whom and when they choose, but must own their disability in order to enjoy a level playing field.
Assessment, physical or other therapy, or personal care provided by school while in school.	Student is responsible for personal services -- personal care, medical and related requirements, just as if they would if they were living independently and not attending school.
Students often receive "Un-timed tests" if they have a disability.	"Un-timed tests" are not reasonable, but time extensions may be reasonable, typically time-and-a-half but no more than double time.
Teachers may be expected to learn all they can about the disability of a student in one of their classes.	Professors need know only that which applies to the accommodations the student requests.

POINT-BY-POINT COMPARISON BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

PERSONAL FREEDOM IN HIGH SCHOOL VS. PERSONAL FREEDOM IN COLLEGE	
High school is mandatory and free (unless you choose other options).	College is voluntary and expensive.
Your time is usually structured by others.	You manage your own time.
You need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.	You must decide whether to participate in extracurricular activities. (Hint: Choose wisely in the first semester and then add later.)
You need money for special purchases or events.	You need money to meet basic necessities.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	Guiding principle: You're old enough to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.
HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS VS. COLLEGE PROFESSORS	
Teachers check your completed homework.	Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume you can perform the same tasks on tests.
Teachers remind you of your incomplete work.	Professors may not remind you of incomplete work.
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance.
Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.	Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours.
Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.	Professors have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research.
Teachers present material to help you understand the material in the textbook.	Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic you are studying. Or, they may expect you to relate the classes to the textbook readings.

Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes.	Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting you to identify the important points in your notes. When professors write on the board, it may be to amplify the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes are a must.
Teachers impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading you through the thinking process.	Professors expect you to think about and synthesize seemingly unrelated topics.
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded.
TESTS IN HIGH SCHOOL VS. TESTS IN COLLEGE	
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. You, not the professor, need to organize the material to prepare for the test. A particular course may have only 2 or 3 tests in a semester.
Makeup tests are often available.	Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, you need to request them.
Teachers frequently rearrange test dates to avoid conflict with school events.	Professors in different courses usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.
Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.	Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant, one who comes prepared with questions
Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you, or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown how to solve.	Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.
GRADES IN HIGH SCHOOL VS. GRADES IN COLLEGE	
Grades are given for most assigned work.	Grades may not be provided for all assigned work.
Consistently good homework grades may	Grades on tests and major papers usually

help raise your overall grade when test grades are low.	provide most of the course grade.
Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade.	Watch out for your first tests. These are usually "wake-up calls" to let you know what is expected--but they also may account for a substantial part of your course grade. You may be shocked when you get your grades.
You may graduate as long as you have passed all required courses with a grade of D or higher.	You may graduate only if your average in classes meets the departmental standard--typically a 2.0 or C.
Guiding principle: "Effort counts." Courses are usually structured to reward a "good-faith effort."	Guiding principle: "Results count." Though "good-faith effort" is important in regard to the professor's willingness to help you achieve good results, it will not substitute for results in the grading process.

Appendix B

Education pays ...

Education pays in higher earnings and lower unemployment rates

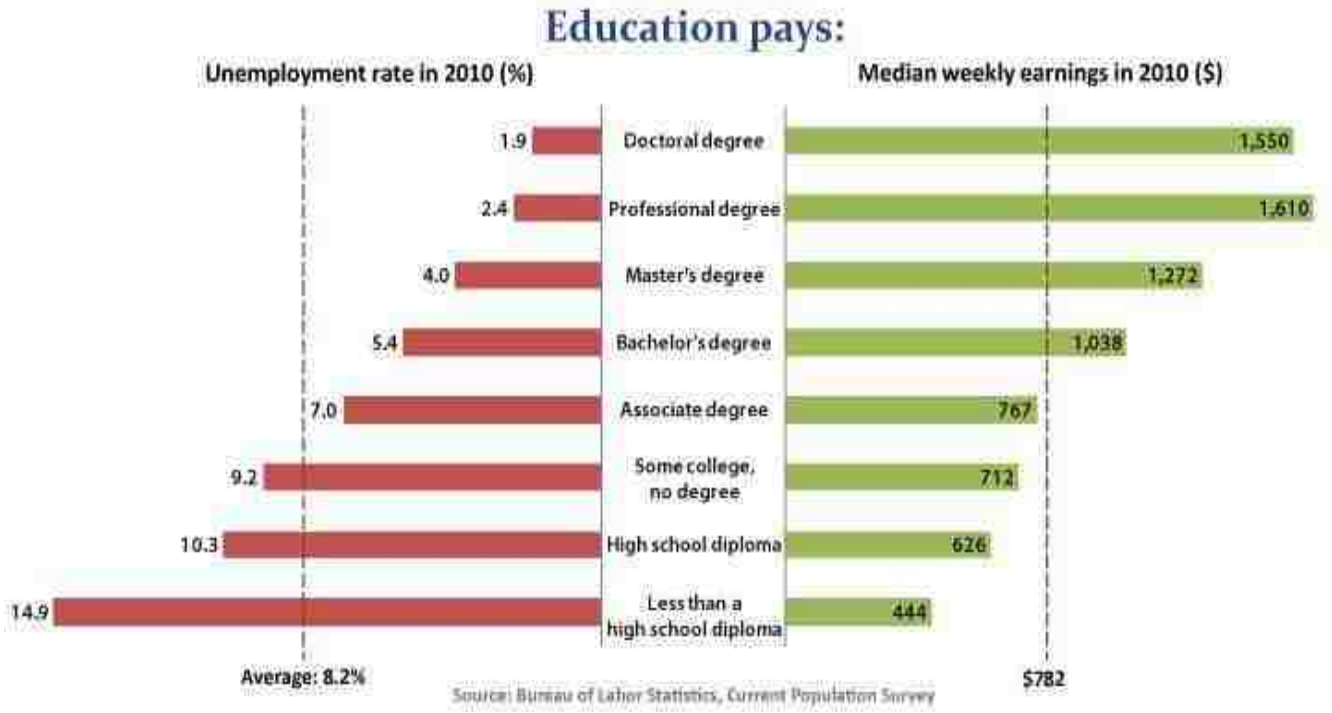

Chart data [TXT]

Note: Data are 2010 median weekly earnings for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Appendix C

Trends in the Numbers and Percentages of Students Ages 6 Through 21 Served Under IDEA, Part B

Table 1-5. Numbers and percentages of students receiving special education and related services under IDEA, Part B, and percentage of population served: Fall 1993 through fall 2003

Year	Total served under Part B (6 through 21)		6 through 21 population in the 50 states and DC	Percentage[a] of 6-through-21 population receiving services under Part B in the 50 states and DC
	For the 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico and the outlying areas	For the 50 states and DC (including BIA schools)		
1993	4,778,939	4,736,029	58,412,492	8.1
1994	4,907,369	4,866,540	59,116,356	8.2
1995	5,078,841	5,036,139	60,109,523	8.4
1996	5,230,663	5,185,444	61,339,104	8.5
1997	5,396,889	5,347,058	62,552,035	8.5
1998	5,539,688	5,486,630	63,763,580	8.6
1999	5,677,883	5,620,764	64,717,510	8.7
2000	5,773,863	5,711,482	65,322,831	8.7
2001	5,861,370	5,797,931	65,704,342	8.8
2002	5,959,123	5,892,879	65,855,563	8.9
2003	6,046,051	5,971,495	65,865,048	9.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), OMB #1820-0043: "Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Under Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*," 1993-2003. Data updated as of July 31, 2004. Also tables 1-3, 1-9, C-4 and C-5 in vol. 2 of this report. The data for 2001 and 2002 were revised since the *26th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of IDEA*: One state revised its child count for 2001, and seven states revised their child count for 2002.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Population data for 1993 through 1999 accessed April 2005 from http://www.census.gov/popest/ archives/EST90INTERCENSAL/STCH-Intercensal/STCH-ICEN1993.txt through STCH-ICEN1999.txt. Population data for 2000 through 2003 accessed August 2004 from http://www.census.gov/popest/states/files/SC-EST2003-AGESEX_RES.csv. These data are now archived at http://www.census.gov/popest/archives.

[a]Percentage of population is calculated by dividing the number of students served under Part B in the 50 states and the District of Columbia (including BIA schools) by the general U.S. population estimates for this age range for that year. The result was multiplied by 100 to produce a percentage.

Appendix D

Consent to Participate Form

Evaluation of Skills or Services Missing in the Preparation for Self-Advocacy: A Quantitative study.

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship or status with disability services, the coordinator, or the University of _____.

The purpose of this study is to better understand what services or skills may be missing in the preparation for self-advocacy for students with disabilities participating in higher education. The procedure will be a single holistic case study including electronic or mailed questionnaires, surveys and personal interviews. At this stage in the research, self-advocacy will be generally defined as a student's ability to (a) take the initiative to declare their status as a person with disabilities, (b) provide assessment data verifying their specific disability and how to accommodate it, (c) work with support services to plan accommodations.

Data collection will involve electronic surveys. Individuals involved in the data collection process will be the researcher.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. Researcher would be happy to share findings with after the research is completed. However, names will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant will be anonymous.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information about services and skills associated with self-advocacy, the opportunity to voice your opinions about disability transition, and increase self-advocacy educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

Lee A. Barnett, Principal Researcher (406) 490-6507

Appendix E

Letter to Disability Services Coordinators

Dear Disabilities Services Coordinator:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lee Barnett and I am a doctorate student at The University of Montana, Missoula. I have been pursuing research surrounding disability transition services in the State of Montana. Specifically, my research is centered on finding if/what skills or services are missing in the preparation for self-advocacy.

I would like to include all institutions within the Montana University System (MUS). Currently this includes the public two and four-year institutions of higher education currently within the MUS. Specifically, the population will be Montana State University (MSU)-Bozeman, MSU-Billings, MSU-Billings College of Technology (COT), MSU-Northern, MSU-Great Falls COT, The University of Montana (UM)-Missoula, UM-Missoula COT, Montana Tech, Montana Tech COT, UM-Western. Three community colleges will also be included in the study: Dawson Community College, Flathead Valley Community College, and Miles Community College. Further, the research sample will include the seven Montana tribal colleges: Salish Kootenai College, Blackfeet Community College, Little Big Horn College, Fort Peck Community College, Fort Belknap College, Chief Dull Knife College, and Stone Chile College. The sample will consist of purposefully selected students from the population.

I will research students via electronic surveys consisting of questions surrounding self-advocacy, disabilities and services. I would estimate the survey would only take 15-20 minutes to complete. The only resources I would request on your behalf, is informing students of the link to participate in the survey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/72L7Q7R).

Confidentiality of both the participants and institution will be kept throughout the research and reporting process. Both the institution and participants represent a composite picture rather than an individual picture. I will follow all ethical codes for researchers, which is to protect the privacy of the participants and to convey this protection to all individuals involved in the study.

Once the research has been conducted, analyzed and complete, the results will be made available to all participants and Disability Services Coordinators.

The expected benefits associated with your participation and help are the information about self-advocacy skills and services within the State of Montana.

Appendix F
Survey Questions

Self-Advocacy Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. Where you on an IEP in High School? YES NO

2. How many years were you on an IEP? _____

3. What is your current age? _____

4. What year in school are you? _____

Instructions Keeping in mind your educational experiences as a student with a learning disability, read the each item and then indicate your level of agreement for the item by circling one of the following: **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
5. I typically recognize when I need help with my schoolwork. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
6 I am embarrassed when asking questions in class. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
7. As a student with a disability, I am aware of my educational rights in the college setting. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
8. I like to work in groups or with a partner. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
9. I am willing to ask my instructor for help with my schoolwork. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
10. I inform my instructors about my learning disability. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
11. I am willing to seek tutoring services, if I need to. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
12. I am willing to ask questions in class. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
13. I am aware of the types of accommodations that can be made for me within the university setting. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**

14. I am willing to access services from the disability services office on campus. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
15. I'm afraid to talk in class discussions. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
16. I feel comfortable talking to my instructors about my disability. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
17. Throughout high school I worked independently, despite my learning disability. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
18. I typically do all of my school work without assistance. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
19. It bothers me to ask for academic help, if I need it. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
20. When I encounter a problem that I cannot immediately solve, I keep going until I can find a way to solve it. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
21. I like to have a lot of guidance with my school work. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
22. I don't anticipate having too many problems handling the work in my courses. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
23. I find it difficult talking with people that I don't know. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
24. I have confidence in my academic skills. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
25. I feel comfortable interacting with other students in my classes. **Strongly Disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly Agree**
26. What was your first semester Freshman GPA? **1.0-1.49 1.5-1.99 2.0-2.49 2.5-2.99 3.0-3.49 3.5-4.0**
27. In order to be considered in the I-Pod drawing please voluntarily submit your email address.
28. Please rate your self-advocacy skills. **None Poor Average Above Average**

Appendix G

Definitions for Survey

Accommodations- Provide effective auxiliary aids and services for qualified students with documented disabilities if such aids are needed to provide equitable access to the University's programs and services. This includes academic programs as well as extracurricular activities. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005)

Disability- An individual with a disability is defined as "any person who a) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, b) has a record of such impairment, or c) is regarded as having such an impairment." (42 U.S.C. Section 12101 et seq. and 29 U.S.C. Section 701 et seq.)

Disability Services- Includes, but is not limited to counseling services, writing or math labs, study skills or time management classes (Getzel, Wehman, 2005). Part of the process for determining the right match for a student and a college is learning about the services and supports available on campus and the process for obtaining these supports (Getzel, Wehman, 2005).

Individualized Education Program (IEP)- A plan developed for students determined to have disabilities addressing assistive technology and transition issues (Getzel, Wehman, 2005). Approaches include placing the child in a self-contained classroom with a special education teacher, to having the child use the special education classroom for some subjects and be mainstreamed or in regular classes for other subjects. Sometimes the student is in all regular classes but receives help from a collaborative teacher and modifications on requirements for certain subjects. The child is to receive educational services in the least restrictive manner. Services also include speech and physical/ occupational therapies. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services, and students to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Self-advocacy- An individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (West, L., Corbey, S., Boyer-Stephens, A., Jones, B., 1999). Further analysis of advocacy skills is provided by Stodden & Dorwick (2001) and Stodden, Conway & Chang (2003).

Self-advocacy skills- Self-advocacy skills include: (a) students taking the initiative to declare their status as a person with disabilities, (b) provide assessment data verifying their specific disability and how to accommodate it, (c) work with support services to plan accommodations (Stodden & Dorwick (2001) and Stodden, Conway & Chang (2003).

Successful- For the purpose of this dissertation, successful means obtaining accommodations in post-secondary education.

Transition or Support Services- Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that: a) is designed within an outcome-orientated process that promotes movement from school to post school activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation, b) is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and c) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of

employment and other post school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocation evaluation (Greenawalt & McAfee, 2001).

Appendix H

Permission to Use Self Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ)

On an email dated January 5, 2012 Natalie Kosine, author of the SAQ, gave Lee Barnett permission to utilize the SAQ. Below is a copy of the email.

Dear Dr Kosine:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lee Barnett and I am pursuing a Doctorate degree in education from The University of Montana. I would like very much to use your developed Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ) utilized in your 2006 research. If reasonable, I would like to modify your SAQ to include the following questions: 1) were you on an IEP in high school. 2) If you were on an IEP in high school, how many years were you on an IEP? 3) What is your current age and 4) voluntarily submit your email address for an I-pod drawing.

Sincerely,

Lee Barnett

Dr. Kosine's response dated January 5, 2012 reads:

Dear Lee:

Your research sounds very interesting. You are welcome to use and modify the SAQ for your research.

Natalie Kosine

Appendix I
Spearman Rho Results

	Q-2	Q-3	Q-4	Q-5	Q-6	Q-7	Q-8	Q-9	Q-10	Q-11	Q-12	Q-13	Q-14	Q-15	Q-16	Q-17	Q-18	Q-19	Q-20	Q-21	Q-22	Q-23	Q-24	Q-25	Q-26	Q-27	Q-28
Q 26 First Semester GPA	0.39	0.33	0.10	0.45	0.18	0.48	0.36	0.07	0.62	-0.01	-0.03	0.30	0.27	0.38	0.28	-0.30	-0.18	-0.12	-0.19	-0.12	-0.13	0.28	0.12	0.16	NA	NA	0.56
Q 28 Rate your Self-Advocacy Skills	-0.05	0.03	0.09	0.52	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.47	0.46	0.40	0.31	0.10	0.09	0.19	0.17	-0.41	0.00	-0.42	0.11	-0.09	0.11	0.00	-0.09	0.30	0.56	NA	NA