

Implementing the SOP for Effective Transition: *Two Case Studies*

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This article provides two case studies of students with disabilities who are each exiting high school with a quality Summary of Performance (SOP) that enhances their successful transition to either college or employment. The authors present and discuss the essential components of the SOP for two students: one with a learning disability and a postsecondary goal of college and the other with a cognitive disability and a postsecondary goal of supported employment. Finally, the authors examine the benefits of completing quality SOPs for the student, the family, adult service providers, and employers.

Currently, many students with disabilities graduate from high school and attempt to transition to adult life without the documentation they need to access appropriate adult services in a timely manner (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002; Test, Aspel, & Everson, 2006). They may or may not have been significantly involved in their transition assessment and understand the full implications of the vocational evaluation and work experiences they had. They may or may not know why they had extended time on tests or a notetaker who helped them organize the essential class content in their high school classes. Consequently, these students face the daunting task of sorting through the complex maze of adult service providers, including vocational rehabilitation counselors, service coordinators, and disability services counselors—many of whom will need to conduct their own eligibility determination, vocational or psychoeducational assessments, or both. Each of these service providers frequently has separate eligibility requirements, application procedures, and documentation needs. Often students do not know how their disability affects their ability to function in various settings, what their academic and functional performance levels are, and how accommodations and supports will change as they transition from secondary to postsecondary settings (Madaus & Shaw, 2004). In addition, many students do not have the documentation

necessary to qualify for disability services within postsecondary education and therefore must obtain additional psychoeducational assessments, often at their own cost (Shaw, Izzo, & Madaus, 2006).

In response to this dilemma, the reauthorization in 2004 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), titled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, mandated that local education agencies provide a Summary of Performance (SOP) to students with disabilities who are exiting secondary school. This SOP contains a summary of the student's academic and functional performance, as well as recommendations on how to assist him or her in meeting postsecondary goals (§ 300.305(e)(3)).

Too often, adult service providers must begin their file on a student without the benefits of the transition assessment and documentation that were collected and used in high school. The years of accommodations and interventions that have supported the student's achievement may be lost upon graduation. The SOP provides an unprecedented opportunity to take the guesswork out of determining what transition assessments have been completed, the student's present levels of performance; and the essential accommodations, modifications, and assistive technologies that will continue to be needed in postsecondary and/or employment settings (Madaus, Bigaj, Chafouleas & Simonsen, this issue).

With quality SOPs, students, families, and adult service providers can capitalize on the wealth of information that school personnel have discovered and documented about a specific student's abilities, accommodations, modifications, and special needs. The purpose of this article is to provide two case studies of students with disabilities who are each exiting high school with a quality SOP that enhances their successful transition to either college or employment. We present and discuss the essential components of the SOP for two students: one with a learning disability and a postsecondary goal of college and the other with a cognitive disability and a postsecondary goal of supported employment. Finally, we examine the benefits of completing quality SOPs for the student, the family, adult service providers, and employers.

TRANSITION TO COLLEGE: TYKIAH'S SOP

The school psychologist worked with Tykiah's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to complete the SOP. They began the process during Tykiah's junior year of high school because Tykiah would need the completed SOP by winter of her senior year to obtain accommodations through the disability services office in college.

Tykiah's mother knew extended time was an accommodation that Tykiah used frequently as a result of her reading processing disorder, which was associated with the learning disability that was identified when Tykiah was in third grade. She used extended time on both her reading and math tests. Tykiah wanted to use extended time on the SAT, so the school psychologist administered both a *Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale* (WAIS) and *Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Test* during Tykiah's junior year. The school psychologist explained that these tests would be appropriate tools to substantiate the functional impact of the disability on learning. These tests would be acceptable documentation for the College Board testing agency to approve testing accommodations for Tykiah on the SAT. The school psychologist knew that the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA requires the IEP to include appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to students' transition plans.

The type of disability services and accommodations a college would agree to provide would have considerable impact on what college Tykiah decided to attend. She would not attend a college that required additional

testing to qualify for services or did not provide note taking and extended time on tests. The IEP team recognized that it was important for Tykiah to understand the documentation described within and attached to the SOP.

Part 1: Background Information

The background information was completed during the meeting. Tykiah was surprised she had received special education services since third grade. She didn't remember how long she had worked with the special education intervention specialists. The school psychologist explained to the IEP team and Tykiah that he would attach the following documents to the SOP: (a) psychological/cognitive, WAIS, 2006, (b) achievement/academic, Woodcock-Johnson, 2006, (c) career/vocational or transition assessment, *Princeton Interest Survey*, (d) assistive technology (AT) assessment completed by an AT specialist, and (e) other multifactorial team reports completed in 1997.

The school psychologist then explained the types and purposes of the documents—the first time that Tykiah had ever been provided with such an explanation. He told Tykiah that the WAIS and achievement tests documented her disability. Given that Tykiah's IQ was above average but her academic achievement was below grade level, the multifactorial team concluded that Tykiah had significant visual processing disorders that affected her learning. With direct instruction and accommodations, such as extended time on tests, assistive technology, and note-taking, Tykiah's academic achievement had improved. Using these accommodations in college will be critical if Tykiah wants to maximize her learning potential and complete her postsecondary degree program.

Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goals

Following the completion of the assessment report explanation and checklist, the IEP team reviewed Tykiah's postsecondary goals. As they discussed the goals, the special education teacher recorded the following in Part 2—Student's Postsecondary Goals of the SOP: (a) attend a 4-year college in business or communications, (b) utilize disability services at college to gain access to assistive technology, extended time on tests, and a note taker, and (c) obtain part-time employment during school and full-time employment after college.

Part 3: Summary of Performance

Because Tykiah had chosen a transition goal of college, the most important section of the SOP was the "Academic Content Area" that described the present levels of essential accommodations and assistive technology utilized in high school. Also, because few curricular modifications would be approved in college, Tykiah did not use any modifications in high school; therefore, no modifications needed to be discussed in the SOP.

From elementary school through middle school, Tykiah had difficulty with reading. Not until she learned to use assistive technology and her school district provided text on tape or MP3 players was she able to complete her reading assignments independently. Her special education teacher therefore wrote the following in the academic content section of Tykiah's SOP:

1. Reading comprehension—seventh grade.

Reading level improves if assistive technology is used to assist with decoding and content is presented through auditory venues. The essential accommodations included "books on tape" or MP3 player, assistive technology products such as Wynn or Read and Write Gold, and 50% extended time on exams.

2. Math—Tykiah has a sixth-grade math level for calculations and algebraic problem solving. She has maintained a B average in inclusive high school algebra and geometry classes. Her quantitative reasoning skills are at approximately a fifth-grade level. The essential accommodation is the use of a talking calculator and 50% extended time on exams.

3. Language—The visual processing disorder interferes with producing grade-level written composition. Tykiah spells phonetically and reverses sounds and needs assistance with grammar. She has learned to use assistive technology that increases the quality of her written work. Tykiah's verbal communication skills are superior. Essential accommodation is assistive technology, such as Read and Write Gold or Wynn, and 50% extended time on any essay tests.

4. Learning Skills—Excellent class participation and verbal communication skills. Tykiah

always completes homework, but her accuracy is not consistent. She had problems with written expression and attention to detail that resulted in frequent mistakes in spelling and math. The essential accommodation is a note taker to assist Tykiah in compensating for the visual processing disorder and difficulty with eye-hand coordination that affects her written expression. Tykiah was provided 75% extended time on essay tests and use of assistive technology to compensate for difficulties with processing speed and written expression. Tykiah was provided 50% extended time on objective tests, such as multiple choice and true-false.

5. Cognitive Area—The cognitive area includes general ability and problem solving, attention and executive functioning, and communication. Since it is apparent from the above academic section that Tykiah performs well in inclusive classrooms with accommodations, only brief comments are needed in this section. For example: (a) general ability and problem solving—overall strong reasoning ability; sometimes needs assistance with prioritization, (b) attention and executive functioning—good auditory memory and stays on task when working on projects/assignments, and (c) communication—excellent auditory and speaking skills; needs assistance with written expression—see language above. No essential accommodations, modifications, and/or assistive technology need to be listed because none are used nor recommended in this area.

6. Functional Areas—Social skills, independent living skills and environmental access/mobility, self-determination and career vocational/transition skills are the third area of Part 3 of the SOP. Tykiah has great social and independent living skills, as evidenced by her active participation in the drama club and successful employment in a part-time job at the mall. Two areas that the IEP team discussed are self-determination and career/vocational development.

7. Self-determination—Tykiah needs to be more assertive about coordinating her own accommodations. The IEP team discussed adding

a goal to the IEP to give Tykiah the responsibility of meeting with her 12th-grade teachers to explain her learning strengths; the functional limitations of her disability; and how the extended time on tests, note takers, and assistive technology levels the playing field so she can complete quality work. The IEP team decided that it would complete this section of the SOP during her senior year after she had some experience advocating for her own accommodations.

8. Career-Vocational Transition—Tykiah participated in the school job shadowing programs in middle and high school. She has been interested for some time in retail occupations and obtained a job as a sales clerk at the local mall. Her IEP team agreed that her career goal of gaining a business or communications degree was realistic and obtainable. No accommodations or modifications are needed in this area of the SOP.

Part 4: Recommendation to Assist Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goals

This section should present suggestions for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive technology services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services to enhance access in a post-high school environment.

In Tykiah's SOP, her postsecondary goal is to attend college, a goal her IEP team supports. Within the high school, Tykiah was able to be successful in inclusive classrooms using books on tape or an MP3 player, assistive technology, a note taker, and extended time on tests. These accommodations therefore were listed on her SOP. Assistive technology is an accommodation that will be needed for employment. No accommodations are needed for independent living or community participation, so none were listed.

Part 5: Student Perspective

The final section of the SOP asks the student about his or her perspective on the accommodations that have been most helpful, those that have not worked, and the strengths the student possesses that people in the post-school setting should know about. The transition specialist who worked with Tykiah for the past 4 years agreed to meet with Tykiah to review the SOP in gen-

eral, with an emphasis on Part 5. The following provides a summary of how Tykiah responded to the questions in Part 5. Tykiah had a good understanding of how her disability affected her performance and how the accommodations she used helped her compensate for her visual processing disorder.

1. How does your disability affect your school-work and school activities (such as grades, relationships, assignments, projects, communication, time on tests, mobility, extracurricular activities)?

A: I need to use my assistive technology and/or books on tape/MP3 players for reading and writing. I do better when information is presented in concrete manner and I clarify what the requirements of an assignment are. I do better on verbal presentations than written papers.

2. In the past, what supports (aids, adaptive equipment, physical accommodations, other services) have been tried to help you succeed in school?

A: I have substituted verbal presentations and projects for written papers. I meet with my teacher on a weekly basis to gain assistance with prioritizing assignments. I meet with my tutor prior to tests and use my assistive technology on a daily basis. I also use a note taker for lecture classes.

3. Which of these accommodations and supports has worked best for you?

A: Assistive technology and a note taker has worked best for me.

4. Which of these accommodations and supports have not worked?

A: Dragon AT (speech-to-text) has not worked well.

5. What strengths and needs should professionals know about as you enter the post-secondary education or work environment?

A: I have excellent communication skills and can present in front of the class very well. I plan on using these skills for my future employment in business or sales.

Tykiah learned a lot by participating in the development of her SOP. She can now better explain how her disability affects her performance on different academic

tasks. When she meets with the disability counselors at the different colleges she is considering attending, she provides a copy of the SOP and discusses how accommodations are coordinated at each campus. The disability services counselors have told Tykiah they are impressed with her knowledge of her disability and the accommodations that have led to success in high school.

TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT: STEVE'S SOP

As the special educator, Mr. Fish looked over the SOP and realized that this process simply organized the information he had already provided to adult service providers who worked with his students to ensure a smooth transition from school to adult life. He pulled out the cooperative agreement between the rehabilitation agency and the adult service providers who specialized in mental retardation (MR) services. The cooperative agreement suggested that the following information be shared among educators, rehabilitation counselors, independent living providers, and MR service providers: (a) name and contact information of service providers responsible for the case within each agency; (b) copy of the "Authorization to Disclose Information" form; (c) statement of guardianship or probate status, if appropriate; (d) written reports concerning the individual's diagnosis, prognosis, and related information describing the individual's functional strengths, assets, and limitations, including any current medication; (e) information regarding the individual's recent medical history, measure of adaptive behavior, and psychological profile, including a *DSM-IV* diagnosis; (f) social history or any other related information that may be utilized by MR service providers to establish the nature and severity of the disabling condition(s); (g) copies of current individualized plans (both the Individualized Education Program [IEP] and Individualized Plan for Employment); and (h) any additional assessment information, including, but not limited to, an individual's work history, vocational assets/limitations, functional living skills, and/or needs for community support services, such as transportation and/or housing (Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 2006).

Mr. Fish was glad that much of the information and assessments that he either needed to summarize or attach to the SOP was documentation that he would have had to provide anyway.

Part 1: Background Information

Mr. Fish invited Steve, his parents, the rehabilitation counselor, and the adult service provider to attend the meeting. By having the SOP completed for the exit IEP meeting, perhaps Mr. Fish could assure Steve and his parents that services and supports would continue after Steve exited high school. Instead of drafting the IEP and sending it home for review prior to the IEP meeting, Mr. Fish would send the draft of the SOP home for review prior to the exit IEP.

Mr. Fish completed the background information and checked all the assessments that were in the file, including (a) psychological/cognitive—*Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children* (WISC)—because Steve's IQ had remained stable over two administrations, the most current assessment was more than 8 years old but was aligned with current performance; (b) achievement/academic; (c) adaptive behavior; (d) social/interpersonal; (e) reading assessment; (f) classroom observations; (g) career/vocational assessment; and (h) other, such as language, visual-motor integration, fine-motor skills, and gross-motor skills.

Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goal

Mr. Fish wrote down Steve's postsecondary goals. For the past 3 years, Steve had not wavered from his expressed interest in working in the local hospital. During this past year, he obtained a paid job in the central sterile supply department of the local hospital. It was important to Mr. Fish that adult services continue to provide supportive services to help Steve maintain this job. Transportation was going to be the most challenging service because the school would no longer be providing transportation. However, Mr. Fish was confident that Steve could obtain an Impairment Related Work Expense voucher to pay for transportation services. The postsecondary goals were as follows: (a) supported employment in an entry-level position of a hospital or clinic, (b) supported living in the community, and (c) use of area recreation facilities.

Part 3: Summary of Performance

Steve's academic skills had been stable for the past several years, so this section was easy to complete. Steve was reading at the third-grade level and could identify most functional living signs, could make change using the next dollar strategy (Xin, Grasso, Dipipi-Hoy, & Jipen-

dra, 2005), and could independently write his signature. In regard to accommodations and modifications that were used in high school, Steve responded best to pictorial directions, one-on-one instruction, and a calculator for any math activity.

Within the cognitive area, Steve functioned within the severely delayed range, scoring in the second percentile. His energy level was good and he maintained a consistent pace of work for a 4-hour shift. If Steve's attention did wane, a simple prompt by a coworker, such as, "Steve, it's work time," was all that was needed for Steve to return to task. Steve had good communication skills and could express his basic needs appropriately. Natural supports were the most effective form of accommodation for Steve. The following is Mr. Fish's summary of Steve's social skills, independent living skills, and self-determination skills:

1. Social Skills and Behaviors—Steve performs well when he answers to a single supervisor or teacher with whom he has had time to develop a relationship. He is more productive in tasks and situations that do not require him to interact socially with his peers. Feedback should be specific and given in small chunks, focusing on one aspect of his performance at a time. Steve also responds well to private positive praise as opposed to public praise. The implications of these skills for a job match are placement of Steve within the same shift and same supervisor on the job.

2. Independent Living Skills—Steve is currently learning personal banking and budgeting skills. He is able to enter money in a checking account and has participated in some lessons about choosing needs over wants in budgeting. He is able to complete a basic grocery list and shop for those items, calculate the total cost of a list of items and the change he should receive using a calculator, read and respond appropriately to basic safety signs and directions, and make microwave meals and a few basic items, like eggs and grilled cheese.

3. Career/Vocational/Transition—Steve has had work experience in grocery stores, production facilities, and restaurants. Neither the restaurant nor the grocery store positions were a good match for Steve and presented too

many situations requiring problem-solving skills beyond his skill level. Steve excels at his position with Central Sterile Supply (CSS) and has higher accuracy rates than the majority of his coworkers, none of whom have disabilities. Steve has mastered five of the most requested operating room supply kits and has completed these kits for 3 months with 100% accuracy. The CSS has offered Steve a part-time position after graduation and is hoping the transportation issues can be resolved. The accommodation that Steve uses in CSS is a pictorial chart of each kit he is assembling and an understanding coworker who provides simple prompts when needed.

Part 4: Recommendations to Assist Student in Meeting Postsecondary Goal

The recommendations provided in this section will serve as the focus of the exit IEP meeting that will occur in the next few weeks. As Table 1 indicates, there are no recommendations for Steve in the higher education or career-technical areas. Neither Steve nor his family wants to pursue any additional educational programs. However, extensive recommendations are provided in the employment area. Because during the first month of his employment, Steve had a job coach who developed the pictorial task analysis of the CSS supply kits, a job coach would be needed if Steve's position changed significantly. Regarding independent living, extensive recommendations are provided that will assist the adult service in developing appropriate supports for Steve.

Part 5: Student Perspective

Mr. Fish interviewed Steve to complete the student perspective section of the SOP. When Steve was asked how his disability affected his schoolwork, he said: "I work a little slower than the other kids. When other kids make fun of me, I get mad. Then I talk to my peer mentor, who makes me feel better." When asked what others should know about his strengths and needs, Steve responded: "I'm a good worker and I try my best. I'm honest, and I show up every day, and I don't make mistakes like some of my friends at work do!"

Mr. Fish was proud to complete Steve's SOP and provide others with a helpful and accurate summary of Steve's strengths, abilities, and special needs. The SOP contained information for Steve, his family, and profes-

TABLE 1
Recommendations to Assist Steve in Meeting His Postsecondary Goals

Area	Recommendation
Higher education or career-technical education	N/A
Employment	Steve would benefit greatly from a job coaching program or job mentoring program where he can learn from another person who is very fluent and consistently successful at doing a particular job. Steve also requires extra time to complete certain aspects of the job. A job coach could help Steve and the employer understand the expectations for work productivity and behavior in the workplace. A job coach could also help Steve's supervisor understand Steve's limitations and use effective job training techniques.
Independent living	Steve could use assistance in handling his finances. Steve would also benefit from having a health-care caseworker to help him with health issues. Steve would benefit from living close to his immediate family member(s) in case he struggles with any daily living skills.
Community participation	Steve would benefit from joining recreation clubs or small groups in his nearby neighborhood, church, or workplace. Volunteering in community activities could help Steve improve his social connections and social skills. Steve would benefit greatly by having a good network of friends.

sionals in the disability field to assist in providing a seamless transition to adult life. The SOP itself should not be shared with an employer, unless the student chooses to do so for purposes of negotiating accommodations, because doing so would likely violate a student's right to confidentiality. Mr. Fish was looking forward to the exit IEP meeting, where he could review these five areas of the SOP, and he felt confident that others would be better informed about how to support Steve as he begins his life as an adult in the community.

CONCLUSION

Secondary personnel must involve students more actively in their transition planning and assessment process and in the development of their SOP. Through this active involvement, the gap between what students anticipate doing after graduation and their actual transition outcomes can be reduced. Students can implement their transition plans more independently when armed with their present levels of performance and recommendations as to what accommodations and supports they will need to meet their postsecondary goals.

Students, family members, and professionals agree that developing quality SOPs that can be used to facilitate effective transitions from high school to adult life are extremely valuable. States and local districts can re-

spond to this new federal requirement by creating their own SOP formats that meet local needs and conditions. The benefits of developing quality SOPs far outweigh the time and effort needed to accurately capture the essence of students' present levels of achievement, useful accommodations and modifications, and recommendations that will assist postsecondary institutions and adult service providers in continuing to serve high school graduates with disabilities. As Olivia Walter, a recent graduate with a visual impairment, noted:

As a recent high school graduate, I found the SOP very helpful. When I was asked to help my IEP team write my own SOP, I was amazed at how much I knew about myself and how much I didn't. While filling out the SOP, I had to think in ways that I would venture to say many students usually don't. I had to be brutally honest with myself when critiquing my strengths and weaknesses, because this would be the document that would help or hinder me from receiving adequate technology in the future.

While I was in high school, my IEP team always encouraged me to use as much assistive technology as possible, because in college, you might have classes where you may need some

technology you didn't use in high school. That little tidbit of information helped tremendously while filling out the SOP form.

I just recently had an appointment with my Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired counselor in which I showed him my SOP. He said that the SOP is actually better than either the IEP or the multifactorial evaluation team report because it puts everything in an easy-to-understand language. This will definitely come in handy if I decide to attend a university that is not familiar with serving people with visual disabilities.

While the entire SOP is useful, I feel that the two sections that are most advantageous for the students to participate in are Sections 3: Summary of Performance in Academic, Cognitive, and Functional Areas, and Section 5: Student Perspective. I found myself really thinking about what I, as a future student without the advocacy of my high school teachers, would need to be independent. It's amazing that most students, including myself, have absolutely no clue what the present level and accommodations are in all the areas on the SOP.

I am in agreement that the SOP is going to be extremely influential in the future of each student who is granted one. I think, because of its straightforward language, it will catch the attention and capture the understanding of college and university personnel who will be responsible for helping students like me be successful in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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