Journal of Rehabilitation
2017, Volume 83, No. 2, 43-51

Professional Characteristics that Impact Perceptions of Successful Transition Collaboration

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Collaborative teaming models are effectively utilized across various fields – in both the private and in the public sectors. In the field of education, interagency collaboration has contributed to better post-school outcomes for students with disabilities transitioning to postsecondary life. The present study sought to identify specific characteristics that influence perceptions of successful interagency transition collaboration at the local community level. Specifically, this study examined if transition team members' experience or job role effected perceptions of collaboration. During the 2014 and 2015 school calendar years, surveys were disseminated to 271 local community transition team members in one southeastern state. General demographics, including work experience and characteristics, perceptions of a statewide interagency collaboration initiative, as well as the Transition Collaboration Survey were completed and analyzed using a multivariate analysis. Significant post hoc tests revealed that that teachers did not demonstrate the positive components of successful collaboration, as compared to vocational rehabilitation transition coordinators. Additionally, time spent on district team had an effect on the perception of overall collaboration, as those with one or more year of experience on the district team accumulated more knowledge of transition planning and services. Implications of the study are also presented and discussed.

Individuals with disabilities continue to face challenges in obtaining positive adult life outcomes as they exit high school. In fact, students with disabilities lag behind their peers without disabilities in numerous areas (e.g., employment, postsecondary education enrollment and completion, independent living) (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti & Plotner, 2014; Wagner, Newman, Camento, & Levine, 2005). As a result of these poor outcomes, the attention to improving transiton programming, and ultimately student preparation, has intensified (Cimera, Burgess, & Bedesa, 2014). However, despite the multitude of legislative mandates, research and funding aimed at the improvement of secondary transition service delivery, it is clear that additional consideration and work is in order. With the ever-changing needs of students, the plethora of service providers who work with transition-age youth with disabilities and the poor post-school outcomes associated with this population, a focus on collaborative service delivery becomes more apparent (Riesen, Morgan, Schultz, & Kumpferman, 2014).

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High-quality evidence correlates interagency collaboration with positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities and has been identified as a critical practice in secondary transition for rehabilitation counselors (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012). If collaboration between rehabilitation professionals, educators, and related service providers is a process that yields better outcomes for students with disabilities, we must evaluate the degree to which we combine resources and work together to achieve our mutual goals (Trach 2012). Working together towards a common goal is a theme that is

applicable across many fields. Collaboration allows entities to accomplish tasks and attain goals that would have been out of reach by acting independently (Woodland & Hutton, 2012). While the importance of interagency collaboration in secondary transition has been stressed in the literature (Gajda, 2014; Johnson, McLaughlin, & Christensen, 1982; Johnson, Zorn, Tam, Lamontagne, & Johnson, 2003; Noonan et al., 2008), various barriers exist that prohibit high quality collaboration.

In their 2003 study, Johnson et al. sought to identify the factors that contribute to both the success and failure of interagency collaboration, identifying specific problems that are likely to occur during collaboration, as well as potential solutions to those problems. While this research is rooted in early intervention, the principles of collaboration are applicable to every stage of the educational process. Thirty-three participants represented various state agencies in a midwestern state and identified the following factors that inhibited successful collaboration amongst agencies: lack of support and leadership, lack of commitment, lack of common goals, and lack of trust.

In the field of secondary transition, interagency collaboration is identified as a promising practice, yet out of all of the practices identified, it is the one identified with the least amount of supporting evidence (Test et al., 2009). Despite the limited research, the focus on collaboration has encouraged many states to develop and implement state-wide initiatives with a focus on supporting community, district and/or school-level level transition teams. The local transition team model to bring together local education agencies (LEAs) and adult agencies to improve transition planning emerged in the early 1990s (Blalock & Benz, 1999). These community teams are vehicles to share information and resources and influence practices and policies (DeFur, 1999). It is important to understand the level and effects of collaboration that exists among school districts and service providers that participate on district transition teams with the goal of assisting students in secondary education to transition to adult life.

Conversations geared toward collaboration often become centered on how ineffective current methods of collaborating are as opposed to those factors that contribute to its success. Noonan et al. (2012) examined changes in collaboration and characteristics of successful collaboration by conducting focus groups and analyzing the social network of ten members of a state level interagency team. Social network analysis revealed that participating in a state level transition team improved the connections between organizations and improved the level of collaboration on the whole. These researchers identified five capacities that served to strengthen the collaborative effort including a variety of partnerships, relationships, time together, shared visions, and shared leadership. A variety of partnerships amongst many agencies that seek to assist individuals with disabilities is necessary in order to build strong relationships and a breadth of opportunities for their respective students. In relation to a variety of partnerships lies the idea of relationships among stakeholders. Cooperation, being a key element of relationship building, reduces the tendency for competitive and contentious interaction and may be facilitated by increased time together on the team (Noonan et al., 2012).

In another study conducted by Noonan and colleagues (2008), 29 high performing school districts were examined in an effort to identify strategies and interventions that they perceived to be effective while engaging in interagency collaboration. Eleven key strategies that were perceived as critical for LEAs participating in interagency collaboration were identified. These strategies include flexible scheduling and staffing, having a transition coordinator that is dedicated to facilitating transition activities and not acting as a classroom teacher. It was also suggested that service delivery locations should be flexible. This might include any of the following possibilities: collaborating at a local agency office, providing space in schools for adult agency professionals to become ingrained in the fabric of the school or providing services in the home or community. This flexibility in service delivery is suggested as a strategy for successful collaboration previously limited to the classroom. Districts also found value in following up with graduates upon exiting their programs and collecting data to refine transition programs. Administrative support, including allowing for flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training and providing substitutes, were found to be crucial in assisting transition coordinators to better collaborate with CRPs. Finally, high performing districts also utilized a variety of funding sources to facilitate interagency collaboration, including sharing funds with agencies, shared costs for programming efforts, and staffing and grants.

Due to the many challenges faced when measuring collaboration, more efforts aimed at understanding how team differences (i.e., position of team members) and length of time spent on the team impact collaboration is needed. The position of team members can often affect how they perceive barriers (Johnson et al., 2003). For example, Johnson and his colleagues determined that decision-making administrators and specialists disagreed on whether the lack of support or leadership, lack of shared vision and lack of trust prohibited successful interagency collaboration. Administrators and specialists also disagreed on how they would collaborate differently. For example, specialists were more likely than administrators to describe alternatives in the collaborative process, including improving communication among agencies, engaging in pre-planning, and involving key stakeholders (Johnson et al., 2003). Further, as participants consistently planned together, attended meetings, spend time visiting sites of other agencies, and attended professional development opportunities together, relationships are constructed. Time together strengthens the relationship among stakeholders and their mutual commitment to a shared vision (Noonan et al., 2012).

The purpose of the current study is to assess educators' and secondary transition professionals' perceptions of collaboration. Specifically, the authors attempted to ascertain the following: 1) Are there subgroup differences by job type/title for the 15 items of the transition collaboration survey, 2) Are there subgroup differences by time/length on district collab-

orative team for the 15 items of the transition collaboration survey, and 3) Is there an interaction between type of job (position) and time spent on collaborative team for the 15 items of the transition collaboration survey?

Method

Procedures

This survey was distributed at the 2015 Building Bridges: Transition Alliance of South Carolina (TASC) Annual Conference, to conference participants who were considered active stakeholders of various district transition teams in the state of South Carolina. The Transition Alliance of South Carolina (TASC) initiative is a state funded project focusing on developing and sustaining an infrastructure that promotes district level interagency transition teams. This project started in 2012 and consists of numerous activities including an annual conference that facilitates collaborative teaming. Currently, 61 of 81 school districts have active teams. During this conference, the survey was disseminated to the 271 participants. One hundred and thirty-five respondents participated in the study, which resulted in a 55% response rate.

Participants

The overall sample for the study included 135 educational and transition professionals, including 35 secondary teachers (25.9%), 32 vocational rehabilitation (VR) transition counselors (23.7%), 24 school based transition specialists (17.8%), 15 other adult agency professionals (i.e., Center for Independent Living and State Developmental Disability Agency staff (referred here forth as CIL/SDD) (11.1%), 19 administrators (14.1%), and 10 identified as "other" (7.4%). For the purposes of the current study, 106 participants were included for analysis due to their direct role in working with and supporting transition aged youth. Of these respondents, 96 were female (90.6%), eight were male (7.5%), and two did not identify a gender (1.5%). Education level of the selected respondents included one with a high school diploma or GED, fifteen with a bachelor's degree (14.2%), fifty-three with a master's degree (50.0%), five with a master's degree plus additional graduate hours (4.7%), one with a doctoral degree (1.0%), and two who didn't identify education level (1.5%). Table 1 includes descriptives for each subgroup of respondents. Each of the respondents was a member of their district-level postsecondary transition teams. Overall, 48.1% of the respondents were members of their district-level team for one year or less (n = 51) and 51.9% were involved for more than one year (n = 55). Respondents also reported how often their teams meet, where 8.5% reported meeting more than once per month (n = 9), 74.5% reported meeting once per month (n = 79), and 17.0% reported meeting less than once per month (n = 18).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for sample population.

Descriptive	Teachers	TS	VRC	CIL/SDD
Total Sample	35 (33.0%)	24 (22.6%)	32 (30.2%)	15 (14.2%)
Gender (n = 2 Not Identified)				
Female	32 (97.0%)	23 (95.8%)	29 (90.6%)	12 (80.0%)
Male	1 (3.0%)	1 (4.2%)	3 (9.4%)	3 (20.0%)
Education Level (n = 2 Not Identified)				
High School or GED	0 (0.0%)	2 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (13.3%)
Bachelor's	4 (12.1%)	3 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (53.3%)
Master's	16 (48.5%)	14 (58.3%)	19 (59.4%)	4 (26.7%)
Master's + Hours	12 (36.4%)	5 (20.0%)	13 (40.6%)	1 (6.7%)
Doctorate	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Length on Team				
Less than One Year	14 (40.0%)	13 (54.2%)	14 (43.8%)	10 (66.7%)
More than One Year	21 (60.0%)	11 (45.8%)	18 (56.3%)	5 (33.3%)
Frequency of Team Meetings				
More than Once a Month	4 (11.4%)	2 (8.3%)	2 (6.3%)	1 (6.7%)
Once a Month	29 (82.9%)	17 (70.8%)	26 (81.3%)	7 (46.7%)
Less than Once a Month	2 (5.7%)	5 (20.8%)	4 (12.5%)	7 (46.7%)
Does Interagency Teaming Improve Services for Youth with Disabilities				
Most of the Time	30 (85.7%)	22 (91.7%)	26 (81.3%)	13 (86.7%)
Occasionally	0 (0.0%)	2 (8.3%)	5 (15.6%)	1 (6.7%)
Seldom	5 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (6.7%)

Measures

The instrument used in this study consisted of 53 questions in three sections: (1) demographics, including work experience and current employment characteristics, (2) perceptions regarding interagency collaboration in general and specific to district team efforts, and (3) the Transition Collaboration Survey (Noonan, Gaumer Erickson, & Morningstar, 2013).

The demographic portion of the survey consisted of nine questions and collected information on primary work setting, gender, highest earned educational degree, length of participation on district team, and frequency of team meetings and included one question on whether they believe interagency teaming improves transition service delivery on a 3-point scale: 3=most of the time, 2=occasionally, & 1=seldom. The Transition Collaboration Survey (TCS) was developed by Noonan and colleagues (2013) and consisted of 15 items that related directly to evidence-based indicators of high quality collaboration. These indicators include: flexible scheduling and staffing, follow-up after transition, administrative support, variety of funding sources, state supported technical assistance, ability to build relationships, agency meetings with students and families, joint trainings, and dissemination of information to a broad audience (Noonan et al., 2013). This survey required participants to rate 15 statements on a five-point scale with five being *very true of me now* and one being *not at all true of me now.* Noonan (2013) reported a coefficient alpha of .881, which indicates that the TCS consistently measures interagency collaboration.

Data Analytic Plan

To evaluate the research questions, the data analysis included two distinct steps. First, associations on the 15 items of the TCS were assessed for the entire sample. These associations highlight the interrelationship between each of the survey items. Second, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using the 15 items of the TCS as dependent variables and job title and time/length involved with their team as independent variables. Results of each of these steps are detailed below.

Results

As described above, associations between each of the 15 items were evaluated, as well as mean-level differences based on job title and length of time participants have spent on their district team. Means and standard deviations by respondent group (i.e., job title, time on team) on each of the 15 items are included in Table 2.

Respondents were also asked if they "believe the district-level interagency teaming improves service delivery for students with disabilities," where 85.8% reported interagency teaming improves service delivery always or in most cases (n = 91), 7.5% reported it occasionally improves service delivery (n = 8), and 6.6% reported it seldom or rarely improves service delivery (n = 7).

Correlations

To assess the item level associations for the entire sample, bivariate correlations were calculated. Overall, associations ranged from r = -.10 (communicate frequently with families with working with other adult professionals) to r = .94 (participate in professional development with participate in professional development outside my agency). Of the 105 assessed associations, 28 were not significant (26.7%). Of note, item number five (i.e., I have the time necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning and services) was only associated with item number seven (i.e., I regularly work with staff outside my school/organization to coordinate transition services), which represents 13 of the 28 nonsignificant associations (46.4%). See Table 3 for all associations.

As previously stated the 15 items of the transition collaboration survey were used as dependent variables, and job title/position and length of time on the district-level team were used as independent variables. Therefore, multivariate tests for each independent variable and the interaction were evaluated. As anticipated a multivariate effect was found for job title/position (Wilks' = .45, $F_{(45, 250.32)} = 1.70, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .23$), time on district-level team (Wilks' = .62, $F_{(15, 84)} = 3.48, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .38$), and the interaction between job type and time on district-level team (Wilks' = .46, $F_{(45, 250.32)} = 1.70, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .23$). These results prompted further investigation at the univariate level.

Job Type/Position. Univariate examination of the 15 items for job title/position revealed differences on 7 of the 15 items. Specifically, differences existed on *I can summarize the shared vision in transition education services* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 2.73, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .08$), *I have a clear understanding of how my coworkers' jobs are related to transition* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 6.12, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .16$), *I have a clear understanding of a variety of adult agency series that young adults with disabilities may access* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 6.66, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$), *I have the time necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning services* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 6.68, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$), *I coordinate transition services with coworkers in my school or organization on a regular basis* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 7.53, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$), *I regularly work with staff outside my school or organization to coordinate transition services* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 7.86, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$), and *I take the lead in accomplishing tasks related to improving transition services* ($F_{(3, 98)} = 3.04, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .09$). Specific results related to all 15 items are located in Table 4.

Following the univariate analysis, all significant items were subject to a Tukey Post Hoc test to determine which group(s) significantly differed from the others. Significant Post Hoc tests ($p < .05$) revealed that teachers did not have as clear of an understanding of jobs related to transition (M = 3.89, SD = 1.08) when compared to VR transition coordinators (M = 4.59, SD = .61), did not take the lead in accomplishing tasks related to improving transition services (M = 3.54, SD = 1.20) when compared to VR transition coordinators (M

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for items by respondent class.

Item (Range 1 – 5)	Teacher	TS	VRC	CIL/SDD	> 1 Year	< 1 Year
Q1: I can summarize the shared vision in transition education/services	3.74 (1.20)	4.08 (.93)	4.38 (1.04)	3.67 (1.34)	3.49 (1.20)	4.61 (.66)
Q2: I have a clear understanding of how my coworkers' jobs are related to transition	3.89 (1.08)	4.42 (.72)	4.59 (.61)	4.13 (1.19)	3.89 (1.03)	4.61 (.69)
Q3: I have a clear understanding of a variety of adult agency services that youth adults with disabilities may access	3.34 (1.21)	3.92 (.83)	4.25 (.92)	4.33 (.98)	3.61 (1.15)	4.21 (.86)
Q4: I feel that my boss supports transition education/services	4.40 (.77)	4.67 (.70)	4.77 (.52)	4.60 (.74)	4.50 (.89)	4.74 (.56)
Q5: I have the time necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning and services	3.19 (1.20)	4.17 (.82)	3.97 (1.18)	3.87 (.83)	3.56 (1.16)	4.06 (.96)
Q6: On a regular basis, I coordinate transition services with coworkers in my school/organization	3.46 (1.27)	4.13 (1.30)	4.53 (.80)	3.47 (1.30)	3.32 (1.36)	4.51 (.76)
Q7: I regularly work with staff outside my school/organization to coordinate transition services	3.00 (1.28)	3.96 (1.04)	4.38 (.83)	3.80 (1.42)	3.44 (1.25)	4.01 (1.18)
Q8: I communicate frequently with families about transition planning and services	3.63 (1.11)	3.92 (1.10)	4.34 (1.04)	3.80 (1.42)	3.51 (1.24)	4.38 (1.03)
Q9: I am involved in action planning to improve transition services	4.20 (.96)	4.25 (.99)	4.63 (.79)	4.13 (1.06)	3.85 (1.12)	4.70 (.59)
Q10: I take the lead in accomplishing tasks related to improving transition services	3.54 (1.20)	4.17 (.92)	4.31 (.86)	3.67 (1.05)	3.60 (1.13)	4.21 (.95)
Q11: I participate in professional development related to transition	4.37 (.97)	4.42 (.78)	4.63 (.66)	3.87 (1.30)	3.94 (1.21)	4.74 (.48)
Q12: I participate in professional development outside my organization where I learn ways to improve transition practices	3.89 (1.23)	4.21 (.78)	4.25 (.76)	3.67 (1.50)	3.63 (1.24)	4.46 (.84)
Q13: I communicate training opportunities and events to coworkers and colleagues for outside my school/organization	3.54 (1.56)	4.13 (.90)	4.13 (.94)	3.93 (1.10)	3.61 (1.28)	4.28 (1.16)
Q14: I feel that working with other adult professionals (in schools and agencies) is important for transition	4.65 (.87)	4.71 (.75)	4.75 (.51)	4.47 (.83)	4.59 (.83)	4.83 (.41)
Q15: I feel that transition meetings with others are productive	4.34 (.94)	4.63 (.71)	4.59 (.71)	4.67 (.62)	4.31 (.97)	4.78 (.42)

Note. Teacher represents high school and middle school teachers, TS represents school-based transition specialists, VCR represents vocational rehabilitation transition coordinator, CIL/SDD represents (CIL & State DD agency staff), > 1 year represents respondents who have been on their teams for less than one year, < 1 represents respondents who have been on their teams for more than one year.

= 4.31, SD = .86), did not coordinate transition services with coworkers (M = 3.46, SD = 1.27) as often as VR transition coordinators (M = 4.53, SD = .80), did not work with staff outside their school or organization to coordinate transition services (M = 3.00, SD = 1.28) as often as VR transition coordinators (M = 4.38, SD = .83) or transition specialists (M = 3.96, SD = 1.04), did not have the time necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning services (M = 3.19, SD = 1.20) as often as VR transition coordinators (M = 3.97, SD = 1.18) or school-based transition specialists (M = 4.17, SD = .82), and did not have as clear of understanding of adult agency services that students with disabilities may access (M = 3.34, SD = 1.21) when compared to VR transition coordinators (M = 4.25, SD = .92) or CIL/SDD (M = 4.33, SD = .98). Additionally, CIL/SDD did not coordinate transition services with their coworkers (M = 3.47, SD = 1.30) as often as VR transition coordinators (M = 4.53, SD = .80). However, *I can summarize the shared vision in transition education services* did not reveal any significant differences between the individual subgroups. Table 5 includes direct significant comparisons between groups.

Time Spent on District Team. Univariate examination of the 15 items for time spent on the coordinating team revealed significant differences on each of the 15 items (*see* Table 4). Given this two group analysis, Post Hoc test could not be conducted, so a direct mean comparison was examined. Based on the examination of mean scores, it was revealed that individuals who spent one year or more on the team reported significantly high scores on each of the 15 items when compared to their peers who spent less than one year on the team. This suggests that increased time on the coordinating team significantly increases one's perceptions of transition planning and services. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 2.

Interaction between Job Type and Time on Team. While a significant multivariate effect exists for the job title/position and time spent on team interaction, only one item emerged as significant for the interaction effect (i.e., I feel that working with other adult professionals (in schools and agencies) is important for transition). Examination of mean scale plots revealed that for each of the 14 items that did not emerge as significant, mean scores increased for each subgroup as a function of time spent on the team. This was also the case for Teachers (>1 year: M = 4.26, SD = 1.26, <1 year: M = 4.90, SD = .30), Transition Specialists (<1 year: M = 4.46, SD = .97, >1 year: M = 5.00, SD = .00), and CIL/SDD (<1 year: M = 4.20, SD = .92, >1 year: M = 5.00, SD = .00) for the importance of working with other adult professionals during the transition process. However, for this item, school-based transition specialists that were on the team for more than one year (M = 4.61, SD = .61) reported lower scores than those who were on the team for less than one year (M = 4.93, SD = .27; See Figure 1).

Table 3. Correlations by item.

Item	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
Q1	1.00														
Q2	.64**	1.00													
Q3	.68**	.57**	1.00												
Q4	.51**	.34	.51**	1.00											
Q5	.33	.26	.23	.24	1.00										
Q6	.82**	.66**	.65**	.50**	.34	1.00									
Q7	.71**	.46*	.76**	.51**	.46*	.63**	1.00								
Q8	.54**	.10	.48**	.48**	.26	.47*	.60**	1.00							
Q9	.84**	.58**	.76**	.45*	.35	.84**	.71**	.34	1.00						
Q10	.74**	.58**	.74**	.52**	.11	.76**	.45*	.42*	.72**	1.00					
Q11	.77**	.51**	.79**	.44*	.30	.61**	.75**	.38*	.83**	.68**	1.00				
Q12	.75**	.51**	.78**	.50**	.18	.65**	.72**	.30	.80**	.75**	.94**	1.00			
Q13	.72**	.44*	.72**	.45*	.05	.57**	.60**	.35	.74**	.65**	.88**	.89**	1.00		
Q14	.31	.34	.39*	-.18	.03	.25	.25	-.10	.41*	.28	.61**	.54**	.54**	1.00	
Q15	.49**	.19	.44*	.18	.11	.39*	.49**	.13	.64**	.44**	.75**	.70**	.65**	.67**	1.00

Note. Item numbers represents specific items assessed. Item descriptions can be found in Table 2. ** represents $p < .01$, * represents $p < .05$.

Discussion

Implementation of research-based practices is critical to the effort of improving post-school outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to adult life. As noted earlier, interagency collaboration is an area of practice that holds promise in the field but is in need of additional research. The current study seeks to contribute to the research base by examining whether or not team participant characteristics contribute to the perception of successful interagency collaboration among local transition team members. Specifically, the authors sought to determine if veteran team members (i.e., those who have served as members of their community team for more than one year) reported higher collaboration scores than those who have been on the team for less than one year. In addition, researchers also examined if scores on the TCS varied based on job title/position (e.g., VR TS, School based TS, CIL/SDD agency professional).

The current study's findings gleaned that there are some differences in how various team members perceive collaboration. As described, teachers did not have a clear understanding of jobs related to transition when compared to VR transition coordinators. This could be due to the fact that many secondary transition teachers have responsibilities other than teaching transition-related services and job related transition skills, while VR transition coordinators are focused solely on transition-related skills and employment outcomes. Also, teachers did not take the lead in accomplishing tasks related to improving transition services and did not coordinate transition services with coworkers as often as VR transition coordinators. These could also be due to the lack of transition specific training and time dedicated to transition related services compared to other responsibilities. Additionally, teachers did not work with staff outside their school or organization to coordinate transition services as often as VR coordinators or transition specialists and did not have the time

necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning services as often as VR transition coordinators or school-based transition specialists.

These findings lend to the critical notion that VR stakeholders are a necessary component of successful postsecondary transition, yet still often play a reduced role in transition planning and meetings with key decision makers. Similarly, school-based transition specialists are proven to be integral to the success of transition, yet many districts report not having a school employee serving in this role full time; solely dedicated to providing and supporting students and staff in their transition efforts. The results of the current study accentuate the critical role of the school-based transition specialist as a support for the teacher to assist with effective communication and planning when time is in short supply. The concept that all secondary special education teachers should be "transition specialists" is one that is not easily attained due to multiple responsibilities and lack of time and preparation in transition services. Having dedicated, full-time transition specialists at the secondary level would allow for a higher level of collaboration with related service providers.

Teachers also did not have as clear of understanding of adult agency services that students with disabilities may access when compared to VR transition coordinators. VR transition coordinators are more aware of other agencies and the services they provide because they are often interacting with them to support clients. Teachers do not have time built into their daily schedules to reach out to and build relationships with adult service providers. The nature of interacting with other service providers and a more flexible schedule allows VR transition counselors to develop a clearer understanding of adult agency services as compared to teachers. As such, it is clear that additional teacher preparation training is essential to ensure future teachers are knowledgeable about the role of adult and community service agencies and the services they can provide for transition-aged students. Additionally, the statewide technical assistance and support provided by organizations like TASC provide training opportunities for current teachers and service providers so that both can become more familiar with collaborative teaming and their shared roles within this endeavor. Pre-service teachers must be provided with the tools to understand the possibilities that exist for bettering student outcomes through interagency teaming and through access to annual professional development so that they may be more likely to participate successfully in teaming by understanding agency roles and functions.

The study also revealed that those who spent more than one year on a team had significantly higher scores than those who were on the team for less than one year. This finding is promising, but somewhat expected, as one would surmise teaming impacts perceptions of others' roles and time allows for all team members to experience collaborative success. Such success is built from a foundation of trust and mutuality, which is built over time (Plotner, Shogren, Shaw, VanHorn Stinnett, & Heo, 2016). It is not enough to have all stakeholders come to one table and expect a high level of investment. They must allow time to see how mutually beneficial this effort can be towards meeting the needs of shared clients. Additionally, they must allow time to define their roles within the collaborative. Once roles are defined, trust in fulfillment of said roles can be established. It is important, however, to continue to nurture collaborative efforts to ensure a functional and successful collaboration effort.

Table 4: Results from Univariate Analyses for Job Type and Time on Team

Item	$F_{(3, 98)}$	η_p^2	$F_{(1, 98)}$	η_p^2	$F_{(1, 98)}$	η_p^2
	Job Type		Time on Team		Interaction	
Q1: I can summarize the shared vision in transition education/services	2.73*	.077	39.86***	.289	0.89	.026
Q2: I have a clear understanding of how my coworkers' jobs are related to transition	6.17**	.158	25.79***	.208	2.13	.061
Q3: I have a clear understanding of a variety of adult agency services that youth adults with disabilities may access	6.66***	.169	12.48**	.113	0.33	.010
Q4: I feel that my boss supports transition education/services	1.51	.044	5.32*	.051	0.14	.004
Q5: I have the time necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning and services	6.68***	.170	15.78***	.139	0.64	.019
Q6: On a regular basis, I coordinate transition services with coworkers in my school/organization	7.53***	.187	34.92***	.263	0.96	.029
Q7: I regularly work with staff outside my school/organization to coordinate transition services	7.86***	.194	11.03**	.101	1.29	.038
Q8: I communicate frequently with families about transition planning and services	1.98	.057	13.89***	.124	0.31	.009
Q9: I am involved in action planning to improve transition services	0.94	.028	18.85***	.161	0.22	.007
Q10: I take the lead in accomplishing tasks related to improving transition services	3.04*	.085	6.87*	.066	0.35	.011
Q11: I participate in professional development related to transition	0.99	.029	22.49***	.187	1.54	.045
Q12: I participate in professional development outside my organization where I learn ways to improve transition practices	1.32	.039	23.14***	.191	1.25	.037
Q13: I communicate training opportunities and events to coworkers and colleagues for outside my school/organization	2.17	.062	13.38***	.120	0.64	.019
Q14: I feel that working with other adult professionals (in schools and agencies) is important for transition	0.48	.014	7.85**	.074	3.45*	.096
Q15: I feel that transition meetings with others are productive	1.97	.057	12.00**	.109	0.49	.015

Note. *** represents $p < .001$. ** represents $p < .01$, ** represents $p < .05$.

The amount of time spent on an interagency team increases professional's knowledge about the services and resources that are available to students upon exiting high school. Service providers benefit from this increased time on team, as they are able to establish rapport with clients and their families before they take over their case. Educators' knowledge of the bigger picture of transition, which can be made whole by their active participation on a district team, can make transition planning and instruction more efficient. Teachers and transition specialists must be aware of the processes of their collaborative partners and prepare students for what to expect during their postsecondary transition to independence.

Implications for Research and Practice

The present study suggests that individuals who have greater experience in participating on collaborative teams tend to have more positive perceptions regarding their current collaboration effort. Additionally, a lack of acceptance or understanding may exist amongst stakeholders who have had no or negative collaborative experience in the past. These ideas support the notion that interagency teaming is a process, requiring a long-term commitment to working together successfully in order to yield positive results in interpersonal relationships. True interagency collaboration takes years to accomplish; it is not something that tends to happen organically without strong leadership and facilitation. According to Morningstar, there are four stages to a team's progress: getting started, going in circles, getting on course, and full speed ahead (Morningstar 2013). It is typical for teams to become frustrated during the first two stages and feel as though 'full speed ahead' will never become a reality. It is also easy to allow the barriers to interagency collaboration to overcome the desire to improve said collaboration. If the roles and the end goals are unclear, it is difficult to work together and compile resources while working towards different outcomes. Coming together to discuss progress made towards goals can be difficult, as scheduling for multiple people that are involved in multiple agencies can prove cumbersome. Some of the barriers to interagency collaboration, such as meeting scheduling, can be alleviated with a supportive administration. Administrators must allow teachers to use the time that is required to meet with outside agencies and personnel, and they can even help facilitate some of those meetings. In turn, it is imperative that teachers communicate the importance of a strong transition program to building and district administration.

With various agencies contributing to the collaborative effort, it can be difficult to discern the primary goal and responsibility of each entity. During any collaboration, it is necessary to share information but this can prove to be a barrier when cooperating agencies have different confidentiality standards and protocols. In practice, the complexity of collaborative partnerships is vast and highly dependent on the membership, mission and vision of the teams in question. It is critical that early in the forming, or as Morningstar would put it, "getting started" phase of teaming, teams establish a common mission and goals for their work despite individual autonomy. This practice will lead the team toward a common vision in their work. The authors recommend that cross agency training would assist interagency teams in better understanding and maximizing the use of each individual agency's role and resources; yet caution that additional research should be conducted in order to support these concepts.

State agencies play a valuable role in providing technical assistance by providing multiple professional development opportunities for interagency teams. In South Carolina, the Department of Education contracts with the University Center for Excellence in Disability to provide technical assistance to local school districts. The current study's findings suggest a strong need for support and leadership in assisting interagency collaborative teams to move through the team development process. Utilizing experienced and successful collaborators as team leaders, facilitators and/or mentors could serve teams in providing them with encouragement and experience in powering through the periods of difficulty that can often impede a team's progress. Leadership training could also be valuable in drawing out the strengths and honing the skill sets of those team leaders, facilitators and/or mentors. Future research should examine current infrastructure and characteristics and understanding sustainability of transition collaboration.

Table 5. Significant differences by subgroup based on Tukey Post Hoc test.

Item (Range 1 – 5)	Teacher[a]	TS[b]	VRC[c]	CIL/SDD[d]
Q2: I have a clear understanding of how my coworkers' jobs are related to transition	3.89 (1.08) [a<c]	--	4.59 (.61)	--
Q3: I have a clear understanding of a variety of adult agency services that youth adults with disabilities may access	3.34 (1.21) [a<c,d]	--	4.25 (.92)	4.33 (.98)
Q5: I have the time necessary to work with other professionals to provide transition planning and services	3.19 (1.20) [a<b,c]	4.17 (.82)	3.97 (1.18)	--
Q6: On a regular basis, I coordinate transition services with coworkers in my school/organization	3.46 (1.27) [a<c]	--	4.53 (.80)	3.47 (1.30) [d<c]
Q7: I regularly work with staff outside my school/organization to coordinate transition services	3.00 (1.28) [a<b,c]	3.96 (1.04)	4.38 (.83)	--
Q10: I take the lead in accomplishing tasks related to improving transition services	3.54 (1.20) [a<c]	--	4.31 (.86)	--

Note. Superscripts represent significant differences based on Tukey Post Hoc tests.

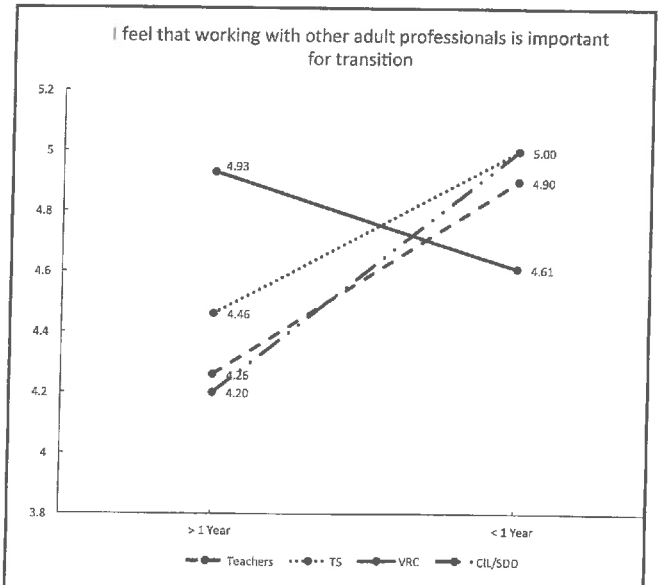

Figure 1. Comparative mean scores for each subgroup by time on the collaborative team.

Information needs to be shared with others outside of the local education agency. Communities have an abundance of resources and are crucial in the transition process, and therefore communities need to be knowledgeable about the transition process and efforts within and beyond the school (Noonan, 2014). Teachers need to be prepared to explain their efforts and initiatives to improve outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities. It is possible that many agencies and individuals within the community have uninformed perceptions regarding individuals with exceptionalities, so it may become the job of the teacher to gently educate members of the community in order to reach them and involve them in the transition process. High performing districts also recognized the value in developing personal relationships with adult agencies and community partners by participating in shared problem solving, goal setting, joint trainings, and a high level of effort exerted by all parties.

If time on team effects levels of participation, teams must look to retain stakeholders as active members of the collaborative. This could be achieved by assuring partner organizations that their needs and goals can be met by working together. If organizations feel participation is positively effecting their own client base, they will likely continue to participate on the team. District teams must also choose a mutually agreed upon time and place for meeting that works for everyone. Service providers can serve large regions with multiple clients. Meetings that only occur in schools, during school hours do not facilitate participation of those members who are not on the same schedule or work within the same proximity. By appealing to the needs of its members, it is more likely that individuals will see participation as beneficial and therefore will remain on the team for a longer duration.

Collaboration requires change, which is unavoidably difficult, especially when focusing on interagency collaboration in which each individual agency understandably has their own objectives for attending and participating in the group. These barriers are applicable to many types of cooperative planning that exist across diverse fields, but is particularly relevant to interagency collaboration that is occurring for students with disabilities in secondary education that are transitioning to adult life after high school. Rather than allowing the many barriers to become so overwhelming that they do indeed prevent effective collaboration, there are strategies all stakeholders can use to improve collaboration. Becoming a proactive participant in a transition team can greatly improve collaboration, and therefore greatly improve transition outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities.

Author's Note
Funding: This research was supported in part by the Transition Alliance of South Carolina at the Center for Disability Resources, University of South Carolina School of Medicine

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