



Preparing Youth with Disabilities to Successfully Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment

David R. Johnson

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (www.ncset.org)
Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota

**A Collaborative Transition Process
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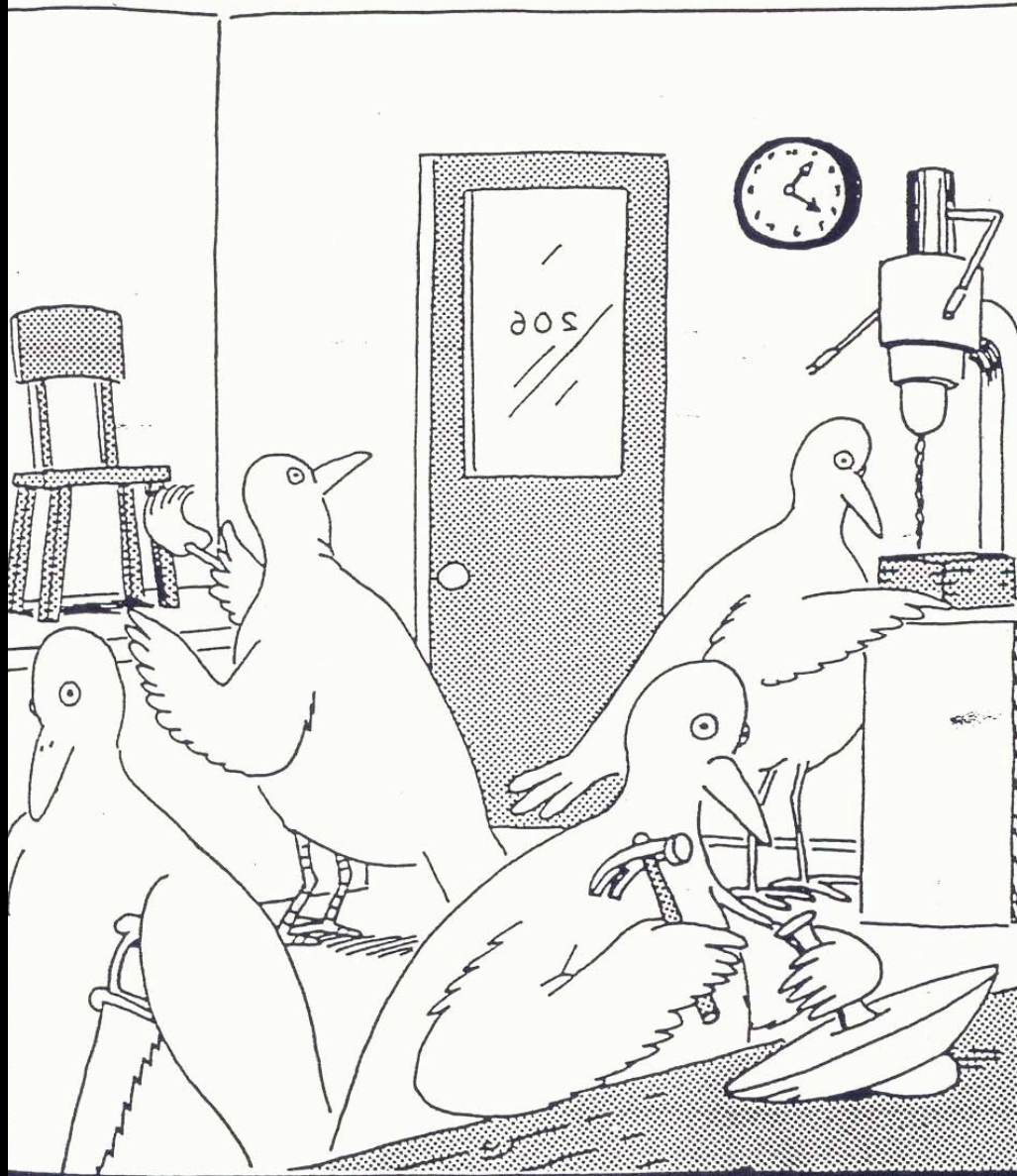
The College of Education
& Human Development

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Interrelated Issues for Today

- A. Implications of state and local school district assessment and accountability systems (high-stakes concerns)
- B. Determining what students should know and be able to do
- C. Meeting students' academic and transition needs
- D. High-stakes testing—a challenge for many students
- E. School completion and graduation is a goal for all
- F. Preparation for future employment
- G. National Framework of Secondary Education and Transition Standards and Quality Indicators

Janson



Non-singing canaries have to take wood shop.

A. STANDARDS-BASED REFORM — How did we get to where we are today?

- 1980's Nation-At-Risk Report
- Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)
- Forgotten Half
- Goals 2000
- School-to-Work
- 1997 and 2004 IDEA Amendments
- No Child Left Behind Act

TEACH MY KID.

WE ARE RESPONDING TO PARENTAL INPUT BY IMPLEMENTING ON AN ONGOING BASIS SPECIFIC PROGRAMS TARGETED TO ACHIEVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN TERMS OF MAKING DETERMINATIONS TO APPROACH STRATEGIES PER SE WHICH WOULD IMPACT A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE STRUCTURE IN WHICH TO CHALLENGE INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTIONAL UNITS WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF CERTAIN REALITIES IN TERMS OF AVAILABLE MONEYS AND HUMAN RESOURCES...

K k L



The Promise of Standards-Based Reform

- Better instruction for all students, including students with significant disabilities
- Improved student achievement
- Better adult life outcomes

The Context of Standards-Based Reform

High Standards

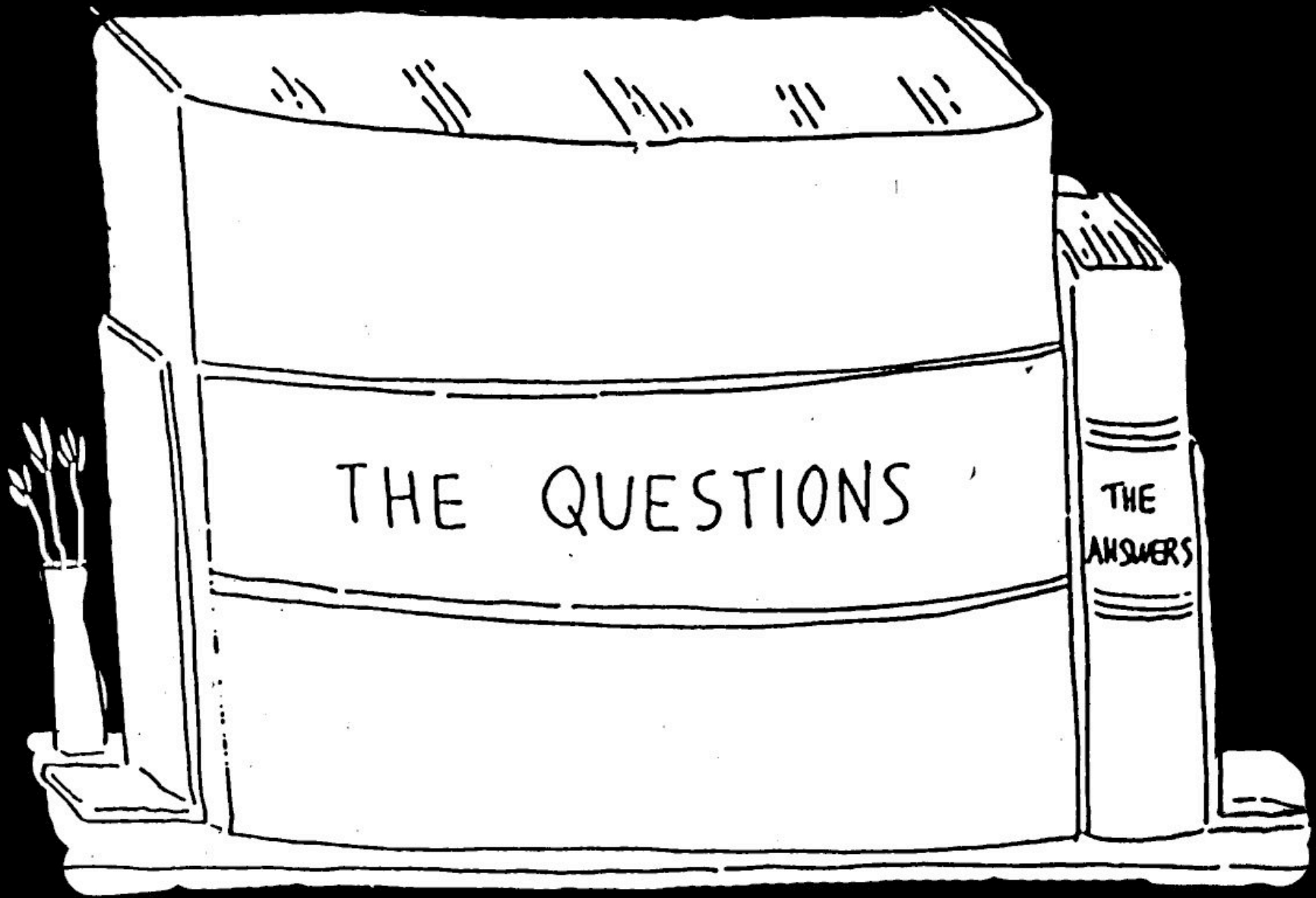
All Students

— *Everything else is negotiable* —

schedules, place, time, structure,
curriculum, instructional methods,
methods of assessment...

AcCOUNTability

The Questions...The Answers



SCHWADPm

An Educational System for ALL Students

Assumptions to Remember...

- All students can learn — high expectations are very important
- Not all students can show their knowledge and skills in the same way
- Alternatives are important, but must be used carefully

How High is High Enough?

HIGH EXPECTATIONS BRIDGE

**IEP Goals
and
Objectives**

**Content and
Performance
Standards**

The Ideal...

- Alternative routes to show knowledge and skills
- Diploma options that reflect and respect skills

(Nothing just for students with disabilities)

B. WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO: Critical Questions

- What should students know and be able to do?
- How does this apply to students with disabilities?

**Setting a clear
course on
learning
expectations.**



Key Provisions in IDEA 1997 and 2004

- Statement of present levels, needs, and how that affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum (GC)
- Annual goals and objectives to allow involvement and progression in the GC
- Services needed to be successful in the GC
- Modifications and support to be successful in the GC
- LRE statements

Key Provisions in IDEA 1997 and 2004

- General educator collaboration
- Assessment—full integration into standards-based reform

Addresses *EQUITY* concerns — access to common standards, challenging curriculum, effective instruction

No Child Left Behind

...reinforces standards-based education for
all students and accountability for results

Not just some...

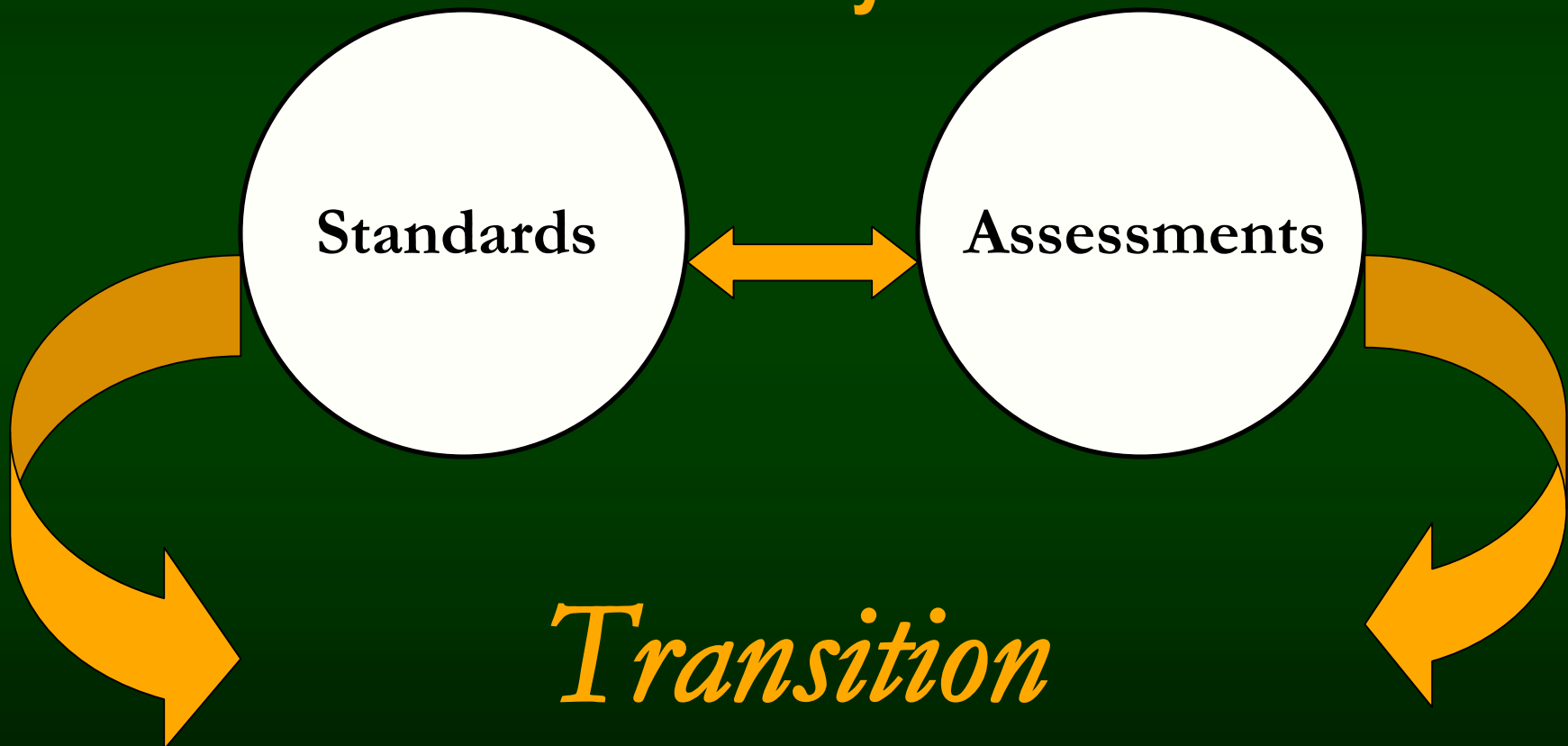
...*all* students with disabilities

What are the Building Blocks?

- State system of academic content standards: *What all students should know and be able to do for future success*
- Curriculum and instructional plans: *What (aka general curriculum) and how all students will learn — varied and rich, multiple settings, resources, authentic applications*
- Individual student needs, strengths considered: *Services and supports to be successful*
- Assessment of student performance: *Appropriate assessments to document knowledge and skills rather than disabilities*

C. ADDRESSING ACADEMIC AND TRANSITION NEEDS

Ideally...



Studies Have Found:

Transition plans separate from IEP
education goals

Goals and
Objectives

Transition
Plan

An Obvious Concern

Separate initiatives piled on top of one another

**High Standards and
Learning Expectations**

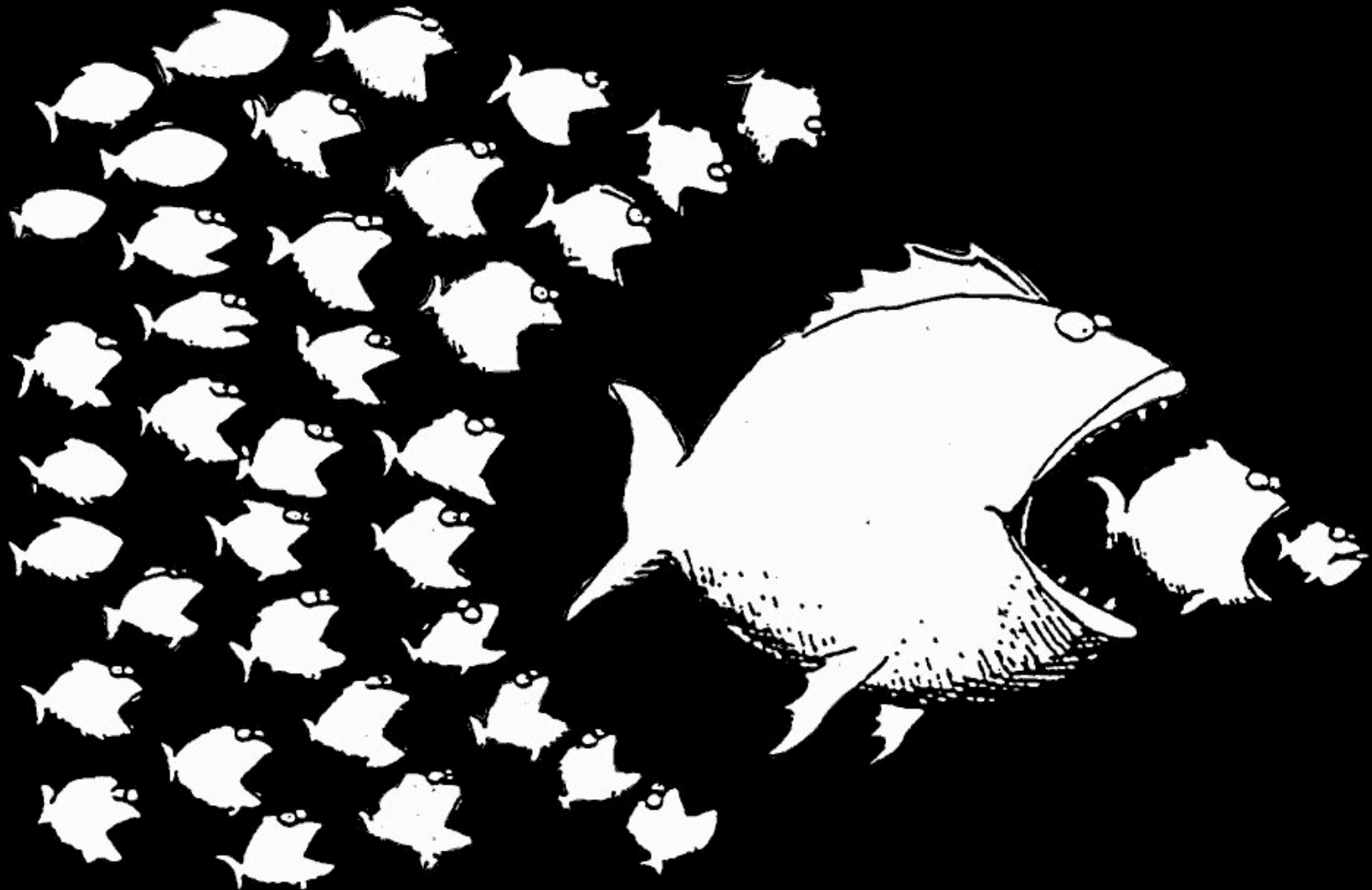
Transition Planning and Services

IEP/Special Education Services

D. “HIGH-STAKES” means that there are consequences for performance

- Student consequences (promotion, graduation)
- System consequences (teacher, school or district labels, assistance, awards)

The pressure is on...



When any subset of students is excluded from the accountability system, there are negative consequences.

Negative consequences for the educational system

- Increasing numbers of students (especially lower performing students) are pushed into the excluded category.
- Resulting accountability information does *not* provide an accurate picture of how well the educational system is meeting the needs of the excluded students.

When any subset of students is excluded from the accountability system, there are negative consequences.

Negative consequences for the students

- Excluded students are often denied access to the general education curriculum.
- Excluded students do not benefit from higher expectations or from reforms based on accountability results.

Some feel students are getting hung out to dry.



When all students are included in the accountability system, there are many positive consequences.

- Meets legal requirements
- Higher expectations
- Access to the curriculum
- Reforms based on the needs of *all* students
- Previously forgotten students are now on the radar screen

Regardless of the focus of the high stakes, testing needs to have certain characteristics

- Different ways to participate
 - Without accommodations
 - With accommodations
 - Alternate assessment
- Universal design

Rising Trends in the High-Stakes Game

- 27 states either require or are in the process of requiring youth with disabilities to pass an exit exam in order to receive a high school diploma, up from 20 states in the 1999 survey.
- 23 states require students with and without disabilities to use the same test and passing score on exit exams (26 states did not respond).
- 3 states (MA, MN, and WI) use a variety of passing score options, including using the same tests but with different passing scores and offering different tests and/or different passing score options.

Source: Johnson and Thurlow, 2004

E. PATTERNS IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

- Graduation rates for students with disabilities have climbed steadily since 1993-94. In 1993-94 the graduation rate was 51.9%; this increased to 57.4% by 1998-99 (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001).
- Graduation rates for students (age 14+) with disabilities vary by disability category.
 - Students with visual impairments graduated at the highest rate (75.1%), followed by students with traumatic brain injury (70.3%) and students with hearing impairments (69.4%).
 - Graduation was least likely among students who had mental retardation (41.7%) and emotional disturbance (41.9%).
- Graduation rates for students with disabilities (ages 14-21) varied by racial/ethnic group, ranging from 63.4% among white students to 43.5% among black students.



Perseverance is key to school completion.

Current Data on Dropouts

- In 2000-01, the dropout rate for students with disabilities was 29%, compared with 34% for 1995-96
- Highest rate of dropout for students with disabilities by state is 70% (HI)
- 28% of students with learning disabilities and 53% of students with emotional disturbance dropped out
- Highest rate of dropout by race/ethnicity for students with disabilities is 41% for American Indian/Alaska Native

Who Drops Out and Why?

- *Push effects*: situations or experiences within the school environment that aggravate feelings of alienation, failure, and dropout (e.g., suspension)
- *Pull effects*: factors external to the school environment that weaken or distract from the importance of school completion (e.g., pregnancy)

Who Drops Out and Why? (con't)

Students with disabilities suggest that the following would increase the holding power of schools and increase the likelihood of school completion:

- challenging instruction
- relevant curriculum
- more support and positive attitudes from teachers and administrators
- flexibility in attendance and policies
- fair discipline policies

Diploma Options Add to the Complexity of State and Local Concerns Regarding Graduation

- A range of diploma options is available: honors diploma, regular/standard diploma, IEP/special education diploma, certificate of attendance, certificate of achievement, occupational diploma, and other variations.
- All states reported providing a regular or standard diploma option for students with and without disabilities. 13 of the states responding extend to students with and without disabilities this single diploma option; the remaining states offer multiple diploma options. The state offering the highest total number of diploma options is NE, reporting 7 different types; some other states, like CO, CT, and WI, report 5 different types.

Involvement of Community Stakeholders in Discussions Concerning State Use of Alternate Diplomas

- Few states currently involve both postsecondary education representatives and employers in alternate diploma discussions across states.
- Only AL, AK, FL, MS, OR, and WI indicate that they include both postsecondary education representatives and employers in alternative diploma discussions.

Study Results: Intended Consequences of Using Multiple Diploma Options

- Increased numbers of students within a state receiving some form of a high school diploma.
- Local school districts have more flexibility in determining the manner of student exit.
- Creating options that are viewed as motivating and engaging for students with disabilities reduces the dropout rate.
- Ability to recognize students (typically general education students) for high performance in relation to honors diplomas is increased.
- A state is better able to maintain “high” academic standards for its regular or standard diploma when alternative diploma options are available.

Study Results: Unintended Consequences of Using Multiple Diploma Options

- IEP teams fail to hold students with disabilities accountable to pass high-school exit exams – expectations are lowered for some students with disabilities.
- Alternative diploma options are viewed as substandard.
- There is a perception that the use of multiple diplomas will result in developing “special” tracks for students to follow.
- Communicating different options to parents and students is problematic.
- Access to postsecondary education programs for students with diplomas other than the standard diploma are limited if the alternative diplomas are viewed as watered-down in content or of little meaning to postsecondary education admissions staff.
- Interpreting the meaning of different diploma options in terms of students’ skills and abilities is confusing for employers.

Study Results: Intended Consequences of Using A Single Diploma Option

- More students with disabilities earn a standard diploma.
- High expectations for all students, including students with disabilities, are maintained.
- Having a single diploma option helps build consistency regarding the meaning of the requirements associated with the diploma – all students work on the same state standards.
- The single option provides future employers and postsecondary education institutions a clearer and more detailed record of the student's performance.
- The single option creates an important sense of equity – all students are extended the same options, tested on the same standards, and viewed by school personnel, as well as community members, as equally participating.

Study Results: Unintended Consequences of Using A Single Diploma Option

- As graduation requirements increase, fewer students (both general education and special education) actually receive the standard diploma.
- The dropout rate may increase if students who cannot meet high standards or who cannot pass statewide tests opt to drop out.
- The standard diploma may become perceived as too general and watered down.
- In order to help students with disabilities to meet the requirements for a standard diploma, states may be lowering their overall standards for general education students.
- The numbers of special education students remaining in school up through age 21 may be increased because they cannot meet all of the requirements for the standard diploma earlier.

F. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Signs of positive growth and progress:

- Numbers of college freshmen with a disability have tripled over the past twenty years
- Increased numbers of students with disabilities persist in attaining a degree or credential
- Increasing numbers of postsecondary education settings enroll students with disabilities
- Higher employment rates are correlated with younger ages for persons with disabilities

Areas of needed improvement:

- Youth with disabilities are less likely to graduate with a diploma
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to initiate postsecondary education
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to complete postsecondary education/will take longer
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to be employed

Implications for Secondary Schools

Focus upon preparing youth in the skills and behaviors needed to access, retain, and succeed in postsecondary education settings:

1. Self-determination & self-advocacy skills
2. Academic process & content skills
3. Use of accommodations & supports to learn
4. Management & coordination skills & strategies

G. NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION STANDARDS AND QUALITY INDICATORS to Guide State and Local Improvement Efforts

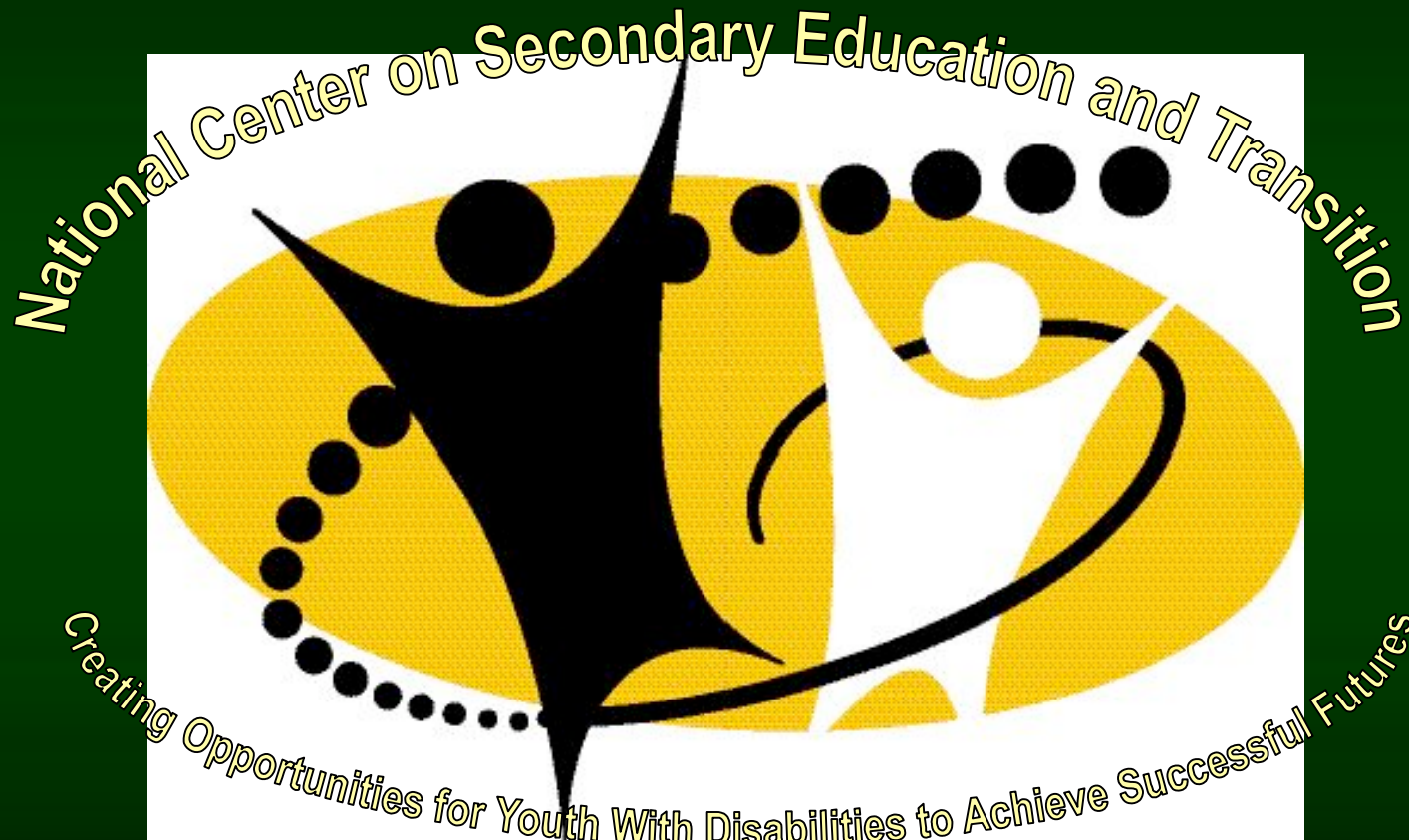
Purpose: To bring together a national, voluntary coalition to create a shared agenda on the improvement of secondary education and transition policies and programs for *all* youth.

Assumptions that Need to Be Addressed

Quality secondary education and transition programs and activities:

- must have the expectation that *all* youth can achieve successful postschool outcomes;
- result from the support and commitment of highly qualified and knowledgeable personnel;
- hold high expectations for *all* youth, recognize individual needs, and strive to improve ways to meet changing needs; and
- promote successful postschool outcomes when they connect youth to positive, responsible, and caring adults.

Thank you!



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