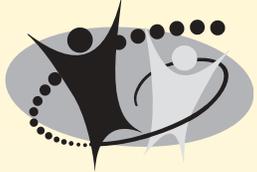
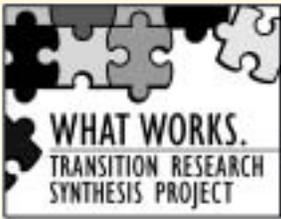


What Works Data Brief

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National Center on Secondary
Education and Transition
Creating Opportunities for Youth With
Disabilities to Achieve Successful Futures



What Works Transition Research Synthesis Project

What are we doing, and why?

During this critical time period, many successful strategies, supports, and programs have been developed that lead to successful transitions (i.e., meaningful work, living, recreation, and participation in their communities) for youth with special needs. While these efforts are encouraging, it is nearly impossible for any one of us to read all of the research and keep up with current trends, project activities, and reports, etc. The *What Works* Transition Research Synthesis Project will summarize this information for you, and glean from it those strategies and interventions that the research shows really work, and for whom. This will be particularly useful for youth with disabilities and those who care about them, including parents, teachers, and related service providers, potential employers, and policy makers. Also, our process of research synthesis may intrigue other researchers.

Who are we?

The *What Works* Transition Research Synthesis Project is a new project funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to review and synthesize the past 20 years of research and advancements in the area of transition for youth with disabilities. We are a group of researchers, educators, parents, and practitioners from Colorado State University, working with a national advisory board comprised of experts from around the country who are also experts in the field. Our project office is located in the School of Education at Colorado State University.

In addition to the expertise represented by our staff and advisory board members, we are collaborating with two international organizations devoted to the development and dissemination of research syntheses. These are: the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Coordination Centre (EPPI-Centre) at the University of London, Institute of Social Research; and the Campbell Collaboration, headquartered at the University of Pennsylvania.

We will highlight these organizations in the next *What Works* Data Brief.

This publication is available online at

www.ncset.org

When?

We plan to produce a series of research syntheses by October 2004. At the moment, we are in the midst of an extensive literature review. (Our initial database contained some 50,000 potential articles for inclusion.) Approximately every three months, we will publish a *What Works* Data Brief through the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET). We anticipate publication of our final results in the fall of 2004 or shortly thereafter in relevant professional journals. In addition, some information will be made available through both the EPPI-Centre and the Campbell Collaboration. We will also present our process and findings at major conferences—such as the annual conferences sponsored by The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH), the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the American Educational Research Association (AERA)—beginning this December at the annual TASH conference in Boston, MA. We will have a Web site with links to this information.

Focus of the Project

The *What Works* Transition Research Synthesis Project is organized around these project goals:

1. To produce four research syntheses of *empirical* transition literature;
2. To produce one research synthesis of *non-empirical* transition literature; and
3. To proactively disseminate all written products and sustain the activities of the project.

Our progress and plans

Goal 1: Produce four syntheses of *empirical* literature.

We are producing four *empirical* (research-based) syntheses in the context of transition for youth with disabilities: what works in *academic outcomes*, what works regarding *dropout prevention* (risk and resiliency), what works in *transition outcomes*, and a fourth piece representing “*other voices from the field*,” including families, educators, related service providers, and employers.

Student perspectives will be represented in the academic outcomes, risk and resiliency, and secondary transition analyses. During the first project year, which began October 1, 2001, we have focused our efforts on developing operational and conceptual definitions for the research syntheses, and our inclusionary criteria for articles. We have also been obtaining our literature set, which includes approximately 520 project reports from 1984 to 1995 originally housed at the Transition Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Illinois. We have developed a protocol for systematic literature searching and information management, along with tools we will use to extract information from articles.

Goal 2: Produce synthesis of *non-empirical* literature.

There is also a wealth of information available about what works in transition for youth with disabilities that is not contained in empirical research. This includes such items as students’ writings, chapters in books, narratives, and local and statewide practices. We want to capture some of this information as well. We will produce a written summary of selected items in our final project year.

Goal 3: Disseminate all written products and sustain the activities of the project.

Our relationships with the EPPI-Centre, the Campbell Collaboration, and NCSET have evolved into exciting collaborations that will enhance our capability to disseminate our results. We recently completed a week-long workshop with the EPPI-Centre, during which we developed several tools we’ll be using to gather and code information for our analyses. We will eventually post the results of our analyses, as well as our actual literature search records and extracted information, on their Web site for easy public access. We will also be aligning our reviews to maximize the likelihood that they will be accepted by the Campbell Collaboration for worldwide distribution.

In addition, we have contracted with NCSET to assist us in producing and disseminating *What Works* Data Briefs on a quarterly basis. Our results will also be disseminated through presentations at

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invited NCSET-sponsored workshops, and national capacity building institutes. This introductory *What Works* Data Brief will be followed by a second brief detailing our research process and partnership with the Campbell Collaboration and the EPPI-Centre.

Brief description of the methodology we are using

Methods

To produce the syntheses of empirical literature associated with Goal 1, we will combine the quantitative review strategy of *best-evidence synthesis* (Slavin, 1986) and the qualitative review strategy of *qualitative meta-analysis* (Schreiber, Crooks, & Stern, 1997), producing four research syntheses of empirical work. To produce the synthesis of non-empirical literature, we will use qualitative analytic techniques to capture the voices of consumers, parents/family members,

service providers, policy-makers, and others.

For further information about our methodology, please look for the next *What Works* Data Brief, to be published later this year.

What You Can Look Forward to in Upcoming *What Works* Data Briefs

This December we will collaborate with NCSET to produce a brief geared toward researchers on our research process and methodology. This will be followed by quarterly briefs during the next two years. Starting in January 2003, four briefs will focus on preliminary results from each of the project's four topic areas, respectively: academic outcomes, dropout prevention (risk and resiliency), transition outcomes, and other voices from the field. During the second year, the quarterly *What Works* Data Briefs will include succinct reports of our final results in each of the project's four topic areas.

How to Reach *What Works*

For further information, please contact Brian Cobb or Morgen Alwell at Colorado State University. Mr. Cobb can be reached at (telephone) 970-491-6835, (E-mail) cobb@cahs.colostate.edu, and Ms. Alwell can be reached at (telephone) 970-491-6284, (E-mail) alwell@cahs.colostate.edu. Thanks for your interest in *What Works*!

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