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Where Do We Come From? A Quantitative Study of the Backgrounds and Professional Qualities of Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts

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WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE BACKGROUNDS AND PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION SPECIALISTS IN MASSACHUSETTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

JENNIFER CARR CALLISON

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ABSTRACT

WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE BACKGROUNDS AND PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSITION SPECIALISTS IN MASSACHUSETTS

May 2020

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The position of secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has evolved into a pivotal role in the transition planning process for students with disabilities. Through state level legislative efforts, licensed Special Educators and select others are able earn a Transition Specialist Endorsement through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Yet, there is no requirement that school districts in Massachusetts have a person on staff who solely acts as a Transition Specialist or employ a person who holds a Transition Specialist Endorsement. Further, little is known about those across the Commonwealth working in this unique capacity. Using a self-administered questionnaire, this quantitative and comparative statewide study examined secondary Special Education

Transition Specialists in three settings: public secondary schools, Special Education Collaboratives, and Chapter 766 approved secondary schools. Specifically it looked at their educational and employment histories as well as their entrepreneurial skills, perceived level of self-efficacy, and aptitude for social networking. As well as provided information about the skills of those who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement versus those who do not. Findings from this study revealed that nearly all of those working as secondary Transition Specialists are Caucasian females. Over half earned a master's degree and a majority were educated in Massachusetts. Further, just under half changed careers to become a Transition Specialist, primarily coming from education, counseling, and health science backgrounds. In addition, findings showed that less than one quarter of those working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists have a Transition Specialist Endorsement and further, less than half are employed solely as a Transition Specialist in their setting. Through analysis it was also found that those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists reported higher levels of entrepreneurial leadership skill, perceived self-efficacy, and aptitude for social networking. Findings of this study can be used to inform the hiring process at the secondary level, drive higher education Transition Leadership Programs recruitment efforts, and lead to further inquiry around those working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts and beyond.

DEDICATION

For my grandmother, Shirley Carr.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Within the field of Special Education, the process of transition planning continues to be an important topic. Starting in the 1980's, the Federal government began to mandate the coordination of transition services for students with disabilities (Kohler & Field, 2003). It was through these mandates, which were directly tied to the 1983 amendments on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), that funds began to be allotted toward transition-based research and grants (Kohler & Field, 2003).

In 1990 and 1997, further amendments to Public Law 101-476, the *Individuals with Disabilities Act,* (IDEA, 1997) expanded previously established guidelines, offering more direct guidance on how to provide transition support for students with disabilities. This is especially important as students with disabilities transition from the entitlement based public educational system to systems that are solely driven by eligibility (Shogren & Plotner, 2012).

These amendments outlined that a student's education should include linkage to their post-secondary goals and plans, as well as preparation for the transition to the next phase of their lives (Kohler & Field, 2003). The goal of creating a more comprehensive process for

the planning of life after high school for students with disabilities began to take shape through this legislation. Further, the idea of ensuring students with disabilities had a seamless transition into their future lives was also emphasized (Transition Guide, 2017).

Additionally, in this same time frame, Special Educators began to realize that if planning for life after high school, or transition planning, needed to be woven into a student's educational programming, that there is the need for supervision over this domain. It was crucial to create a role charged with fostering and assisting students as they transitioned out of high school. This position has become known today as the Transition Specialist (DeFur & Taymans, 1995).

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) defined a Transition Specialist as;

> "…an individual who plans, coordinates, delivers and evaluates transition education and services at the school or system level, in conjunction with other educators, families, students, and representatives of community organizations." (Division on Career Development and Transition, 2000)

During the late 1990's secondary Special Educators began taking on the duties of what is now known as the Transition Specialist, as it became clear that services for young adults with disabilities needed to be coordinated between high school and post-secondary settings by a service provider (Division on Career Development and Transition, 2000). At that time, however, only a handful of states within the United States offered any additional

licensure options for Special Educators to become certified as Transition Specialists. Massachusetts was not among them (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geieger, & Morningstar, 2003).

The process of planning for a student's transition was being assigned to secondary Special Educators to complete in addition to their other duties (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009). Ultimately, those assigned had not received any form of comprehensive training on the process of transition planning. In fact, most teacher training programs for Special Educators do not include more than one course on transition planning competencies (Morningstar, Kyeong-Hwa, & Clark, 2008) and those enrolled in courses on transition planning reported not feeling prepared to complete the tasks associated with taking on the role of a Transition Specialist (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geiger, & Morningstar, 2003). Even today, many school districts still split this role between multiple staff members and do not have a full-time person dedicated to transition planning (Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009).

In 2012, legislation in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was signed into law that allowed for an endorsement for Transition Specialists to be created. This endorsement could be earned by those working in secondary Special Education in the Commonwealth (Massachusetts Legislature, 2012). This legislation further defined the work of Transition Specialists; it also granted the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) the power to refine the expectations and duties of Transition Specialists (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013).

To define the requirements of this endorsement, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2013) utilized a variety of sources to identify the

competencies a practitioner would need to possess to earn the Transition Specialist Endorsement. Additionally, the legislation dictated that those with licenses in Special Education or Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, who are working in a secondary education setting or have experience in this setting, could apply for the endorsement (Youth on the Move, 2012).

The Massachusetts DESE (2013) defined what the role would include for competencies and what experience and education a person should have to apply for the Transition Specialist Endorsement. There was no clear explanation, however, on what skills and qualities a person may need to complete the duties of this unique role.

Problem Statement

As previously stated, courtesy of legislative efforts, competencies required of practitioners certified as Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education have been defined and outlined (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013). At this juncture, however, there is little analysis or examination of the backgrounds and professional qualities of those who are working as Transition Specialists in the field.

Much of the existing scholarly research in the field of Special Education, focuses on the competencies and specific task areas that are required to do the work of a Transition Specialist (Morningstar & Kleinhammer, 2005). There is a significant body of literature defining how to build and run programs to teach practitioners to do the work in the field (Flexer, Simmons, & Tankersley, 1997; Morningstar & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2005;

Morningstar, Kyeong-Hwa, & Clark, 2009; Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009). There is also a body of literature focused on the implementation and perceptions of transition competencies of those working in the field (DeFur & Taymans, 1995; Kohler, 1996; Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009).

Due to these areas of research, the Special Education community possesses a rich bank of information explaining what tasks a Transition Specialist should accomplish as part of the duties of their job. However, very limited information is available about what those working in the field at Transition Specialists should potentially possess in terms of professional qualities or about their educational and employment histories.

This notable gap in the literature led me to examine a parallel field of study, Vocational Rehabilitation. Through this review, I found that a study conducted by Tilson and Simonsen (2013) examined the personal attributes of employment specialists who are working with transition-aged youth cited a similar problem in the field of disability employment. Stating that; "As the disability employment field struggles to recruit, train and retain qualified employment specialists, it is surprising that there is limited research about the personal attributes of successful employment specialists" (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013, p. 126).

Throughout the piece outlining the personal attributes of employment specialists, Tilson and Simonsen (2013) outline competencies and activities required in the position. Some of these include the same key elements, knowledge and skills outlined for secondary Special Education Transition Specialists (Council for Exceptional Children, 2013).

Specifically, similarities can be seen in the areas of post-school outcomes, employment, and assessment focused on identifying vocational strengths and weaknesses.

Tilson and Simonsen (2013) discovered that there were specific attributes to professionals in this field. They found that principled optimism, strong cultural competence, business-oriented professionalism and networking savvy (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013) were the attributes of successful employment specialists.

Within the limitations of their study, Tilson and Simonsen (2013) noted that generalizations from their work can be used in parallel fields including secondary special education;

> Generalizability of our finding to other settings may be limited; however, we believe that the Bridges staff who participated in our study can serve as viable proxies for staff of community rehabilitation provider agencies, and school transition specialists charged with developing work experiences and paid employment. (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013, p.135)

The work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013) identifies and starts to define the gap I have identified in the field of Special Education. As previously stated in this chapter, though scholars have uncovered much about the tasks required of and the competencies expected of Transition Specialists, they have left space for further inquiry. Little research exists that is focused on the backgrounds and professional qualities of the people working as Transition

Specialists in secondary Special Education. Further, little information is available about what skills they utilize to complete this unique role.

Situational Context

As previously noted, in 2012 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted legislation that provides for Special Educators and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to become professionally endorsed as Transition Specialists by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Youth on the Move, 2012). At that time, qualified candidates for this endorsement, who met the prerequisites, could submit a portfolio for a panel review (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014). This option was only available in 2014 and since is not an option for practitioners. Portfolios had to demonstrate proficiency in multiple areas of competency including an essay, post-secondary transition experience, transition assessment, interagency collaboration, evidence of professional development, evidence of community-based transition services, and evidence of student and family collaboration (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014).

At that time, I was a professionally licensed Special Educator, who met the prerequisites and had been working as a Transition Specialist for nearly a decade. I submitted my portfolio in January 2015. I was notified in September of the same year that my 320-page portfolio was approved, and I was awarded the Transition Specialist Endorsement, which is valid for five years. If those who did not meet the pre-requisites would like to pursue this endorsement, they are required to complete coursework at an

approved Transition Specialist Teacher Preparation program (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014).

Additionally, it is important to note that anyone who met the pre-requisite standards was able to apply. One did not have to be currently employed as a Transition Specialist or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to apply for the review panel. Applicants merely had to demonstrate experience working under a specific license for a specified amount of time (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014).

At the opening of the 2015-2016 school year, Massachusetts was home to 396 public secondary schools, 26 Special Education collaboratives and 106 Chapter 766 Approved Special Education Schools serving high school aged students. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Website, 2016). Out of those respective schools and collaboratives, it is unknown how many employ a person in the role of Transition Specialist or someone who completes the competencies outlined for the role. Additionally, I am one of the founding members of a group of Transition Coordinators in Massachusetts. This group, founded in 2008, has grown through word of mouth and is open to those who act as Transition Coordinators/Specialists in public school districts and special education collaboratives. This group meets monthly and is currently comprised of 64 members (Schoology, 2019).

Personal Context

Today, I am still employed as a Transition Specialist in secondary Special Education. Entering the field of education as a career changer, I began my journey into Special Education in the fall of 2007. After seven years in radio media marketing, promotions, and on-air work in three major radio markets including Boston, San Francisco, and San Bernardino I elected to change my career. Feeling unfulfilled, I began a journey towards a position where I felt I could make a difference in the lives of others.

In 2007, I accepted a position as a Paraprofessional in the Office of Special Education at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At the end of my first year, I applied for the vacant Transition Coordinator position. This role appealed to me because it spoke to my communications focused background. My district was looking for a person to fill the role who could network and create relationships with a variety of stakeholders both in and outside of the school, as well as, one who had the skills and expertise needed to work with students with disabilities and their families.

My supervisor at the time saw the potential value in hiring a candidate who did not possess a background solely in Special Education, but rather a background building relationships and developing connections. When I was given the role of Transition Coordinator, my supervisor was betting that she was not just getting a Special Educator but was also going to be able to utilize and activate my background knowledge and professional qualities.

Presently, I am in my sixth year as the Transition Specialist for the Winchester Public Schools Office of Special Education. I continue to see how my past experiences influence my current and future successes in this role. Some of the duties associated with my work focus on building networks of relationships, creating opportunities, and teaching real world skills. My work is not contained in a classroom, following one curriculum.

This position requires independence, creative entrepreneurial leadership skills, an efficacious spirit, self-management skills, as well as strong social networking skills. I find that because of the personal and professional qualities I possess in conjunction with my educational and employment histories, I am continuing to excel in this area of secondary Special Education.

Additionally, I have found that my positionality favorably impacts my ability to effectively act as the connector between high school and post-secondary life. From an epistemological and paradigmatic perspective, I would be considered a modern, positivist thinker. I am of the mindset that what we know to be true is informed by the process of gathering and analyzing data, testing hypotheses and proving or disproving results based on their external validity when compared with known reality (Hatch, 2006). This manner of thinking falls in line with my position within secondary Special Education as much of what I do is centered on systems that have specific parameters that are designed to respond to the needs of students as demonstrated by the results of testing and reports.

Both state and federal laws dictate what types of supports my students are eligible to access after high school as well as what types of opportunities will be available based on

standardized internal processes in a variety of post-secondary settings. This includes the transition to colleges, workplaces, and to state-funded and supported programs. Due to my modern positionality, I see organizational structures as entities that are governed through rational, standardized processes (Hatch, 2006). I am very comfortable navigating organizational systems with pre-existing rules and parameters and can help others navigate these same complex organizational systems.

Considering the previously mentioned legislation in Massachusetts, coupled with the move to endorse practitioners as Transition Specialists through the DESE (Youth on the Move, 2012), as well as, the development of a variety of Certificate Programs designed to prepare Special Educators to be endorsed as Transition Specialists (Massachusetts Legislative Bill, 2012) it is clear that there is a growing need for people engaged in the work of transition planning in Massachusetts. These developments in the field fueled my curiosity about who those people are in my home state. This curiosity drove me to endeavor to know more about those who are working in this niche within secondary Special Education.

Rationale

The fact that little is known about the people who are employed as Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education, coupled with my own positionality drove my desire to conduct this study. Through this work, my intention is to contribute knowledge to the scholarly literature that is focused on this impactful role and those who are employed in the field. I hoped to begin to fill a gap in the literature and develop a more comprehensive

understanding of those employed as Transition Specialists within secondary Special Education.

Specifically, I highlighted the backgrounds and professional qualities of professionals working as Transition Specialists. Due to the enactment of legislation in Massachusetts, as well as my professional history as a Transition Specialist in Massachusetts, I conducted my study in the Commonwealth. Using the Special Education landscape of Massachusetts as my field, I gathered and synthesized information about these professionals that will be useful in both secondary and higher education settings.

The results of my study can be used in multiple ways across the Commonwealth as well as provide insight on Transition Specialists to the scholarly community. First, in secondary education, the results can provide meaningful information to administrative staff as well as human resources professionals about the background and skills of people who are working as Transition Specialists. Second, my work can be used by professionals in higher education Transition Specialist preparation programs as they consider candidates for admission. And finally, my study adds to the body of literature around Transition Specialists and provides additional information about those working in this unique role.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of my study was to learn more about the people who are currently working as Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Guided by my first-hand knowledge and experience as a Transition

Specialist, as well as the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013), I designed a study that examined these professionals. I endeavored to glean information about not only their professional qualities, but also their educational backgrounds and employment histories.

Theoretical Framework

This study was designed and guided by a triad of theoretical frames; Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory. These theories will be further examined in Chapter 2. Additionally, it's important to consider that the use of these theories was influenced by my positionality as a modern, positivist thinker.

The tenets of positivism outline "that real events can be observed empirically and explained with logical analysis" (Kaboub, 2008). This is important to my study as I use a quantitative approach that allows for observation of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists statewide. Further information on the methods used in my study is discussed in Chapter 3.

The theories used to guide my study connected to the findings of the study on the personal attributes of employment specialists conducted by Tilson and Simonsen (2013) as well as aligned with the required competencies for Transition Specialists (DCDT, 2001). These competencies are further explained in Chapter 2.

Research Questions

My research questions are fueled by my theoretical framework. In chapter 2, I will further explain my theoretical framework and expand upon the trio of theories utilized to

frame my work. As previously stated in this chapter, the theories I utilized to create my theoretical framework are Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory.

Overarching Research Question

> What are the professional and educational backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts and how do their entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived level of self-efficacy, and aptitude for social networking impact their ability to complete the duties required of this position?

Sub-Questions

a) What are the professional and educational backgrounds of Transition Specialists?
b) To what level do Transition Specialists act as entrepreneurial leaders in their work?
c) How do Transition Specialists perceive their level of self-efficacy in their work?
d) To what extent does their aptitude for social networking influence a Transition Specialists' abilities in their work?

Conclusion

My work as a scholar was driven by my professional experience as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist. I was interested conducting a study that focused on learning more about those who are also Transition Specialists in Massachusetts, not only to close a gap in the literature, but also because I felt compelled to understand those who share my passion. Through my work I hoped to provide a clearer understanding about where

Transition Specialists draw their skills from, what skills they utilize to complete the duties and tasks related to their jobs, and what makes them come to work each day.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"If you don't define yourself, people will make you up." – Unknown

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the theories I am using to guide my work are Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory. In this chapter, I review literature that examines and defines the theoretical framework guiding my study. To do this. I will first discuss my practice and experiences as a Transition Specialist. In doing so, I will demonstrate the intersectionality between my work and my chosen theoretical frame. Next, I will review literature that defines each of my three chosen theories; Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory.

Specifically, utilizing existing literature and current research, I will define the theories and provide further explanation of each. Through this examination I will use literature from within the field of Special Education to illustrate the connection between the theoretical and the practical to support my study of Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education.

Grounding a Theoretical Framework in the Practice of Transition

A Transition Specialist is a position within secondary Special Education that is designed to guide students with disabilities as they plan for the move from high school to post-secondary life (Asselin, Todd-Allen, and deFur, 1998). Though, this position is not a legally mandated role in Massachusetts it is expected that students with disabilities receive transition planning services starting at age 14 (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009).

To ground my study, I chose theories that not only reflect the professional work that I do as a Transition Specialist in secondary Special Education in Massachusetts, but also align with the Advanced Professional Standards Needed for a Special Education Transition Specialist as outlined by the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition (CEC, 2013). Further, utilizing the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013), which was the initial inspiration for my research, I identified places where their findings and my own interests intersected. Tilson and Simonsen (2013), identified what they considered to be four personal attributes held by successful employment specialists working with transition age youth. As cited in Chapter 1, the four attributes identified were principled optimism, cultural competence, business-oriented professionalism and networking savvy (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013).

The work of a Transition Specialist is multi-faceted and requires a variety of skills and competencies to successfully complete it (Morgan, Callow-Heusser, Horrocks, et al., 2014). In 2013, the Advanced Professional Standards needed for a Special Education

Transition Specialist were released. These standards, which were an update of the former DCDT Transition Specialist Fact Sheet (2000) outlined seven overarching competencies that a Transition Specialist should have. Under each competency area, both specific areas of knowledge and skills are assigned.

Table 1 outlines the competencies and duties required in my current job description as the Transition Specialist in the Winchester, Massachusetts Public Schools Office of Special Education (Winchester Public Schools, 2014) as well as duties that have since evolved in this role. This table connects my current duties to the knowledge and skills outlined by the CEC (2013) as well as the theories utilized in my theoretical frame. Later in this chapter, I will further define each theory and provide additional connections between my practical job-related duties and competencies and the theoretical that each theory used.

Table 1

Advanced Preparation Standard, Job Related Duties & Theories

Advanced Preparation Standard	Job Related Duty/Knowledge	Connected Theory
Assessment	- Has awareness of local and federal legislation in special education and transition planning - Stays current on best practice for transition assessment - Conducts a variety of formal and informal transition assessments designed to meet individual student needs	Entrepreneurial Leadership Self-Efficacy Social Networking Theory

	- Interprets results of transition assessments for students, families and professionals - Utilize transition assessment results to develop work-based learning opportunities, develop post-secondary supports, and develop measurable post-secondary goals.	
Curricular Content Knowledge	- Pursue ongoing professional development to broaden knowledge and expertise - Maintains current knowledge of school based and post-school services - Uses knowledge of diverse learning needs to assist students and families with the transition planning process - Work collaboratively with staff to ensure transition related activities are embedded across content areas when appropriate - Serves as resource about transition planning, community agencies, postsecondary programs and state agencies for students, families and staff - Stay current on state agency services including the Chapter 688 Process and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) - Oversee and develop pre-employment experiences for students - Work with students and IEP teams to ensure transition planning is facilitated	Entrepreneurial Leadership Social Networking Self-Efficacy

Programs, Services and Outcomes	- Conduct ongoing program evaluation to improve services and programs district wide - Work to ensure students have annual goals and objectives are related to measurable post-secondary goals - Help students, families and IEP teams to develop a service delivery plan which includes instructional and related activities which align with a student's post-secondary vision and strengths - Develop programming and educational opportunities for students that correspond with student's post-secondary goals - Develop partnerships as needed to facilitate program development and student engagement in transition planning related activities - Ensure programming is properly modified and specialized both in school and off-campus settings - Create ongoing partnerships with state agencies including MRC, DDS and DMH to ensure students are receiving appropriate post-secondary services if needed	Entrepreneurial Leadership Social Networking
Research and Inquiry	- Pursue ongoing professional development opportunities around transition planning best practice - Utilize knowledge of professional literature and	Entrepreneurial Leadership Self-Efficacy

	standards to continue to improve practices and implement program development - Maintain current knowledge of transition practices, programs and services - Collect data on post-secondary outcomes (Indicator 13) and review data for relevant information to improve transition services at the school and district level	
Leadership and Policy	- Coordinates career exploration activities including tours of businesses, informational interviews, job shadow experiences and internships both on and off campus – providing/coordinating job coach support as needed - Identifies and facilities appropriate modifications and accommodations in community environments - Cultivates relationships with local community organizations and businesses - Assesses and when possible develops natural support systems for transition to specific post-school environments - Serves as resource about community agencies, postsecondary programs and state agencies	Entrepreneurial Leadership Self-Efficacy Social Networking
Professional and Ethical Practice	- Stays current on best practice in transition planning and service delivery	Self-Efficacy

	- Continually pursues opportunities for professional development related to transition planning - Stays current with Special Education Law and school district policies - Develops professional practice for communication with all stakeholders involved in student transition process - Participate in inter-agency teams to share resources and create partnerships	
Collaboration	- Acts as liaison to all Massachusetts human service agencies - Cultivates relationships with local community organizations and businesses - Serves as resource about community agencies postsecondary programs for students, families and professionals - Provides individualized counseling to students and families about post-secondary options and the transition process - Assists students and IEP Teams with transition planning including developing post-secondary goals and objectives - Works with student and IEP Team to develop a transition plan that aligns with the student's vision, strengths and areas of need	Entrepreneurial Leadership Self-Efficacy Social Networking

	- Participate in inter-agency teams to share resources and create partnerships - Host a variety of opportunities for students, families and professionals including a Transition Fair and seminars on transition planning and related issues

The work of a Transition Specialist is independent, complex, and requires a myriad of skills and competencies that go beyond those of a Special Educator who works in a traditional classroom setting (Barnes and Bullock, 1995; Morningstar, Kim, and Clark, 2008). Though I am part of a larger Special Education department within my district, I am the only Transition Specialist. Further, it's important to consider that though an endorsement as a Transition Specialist is available to Special Educators and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012) it is not a mandated position.

As demonstrated in Table 1, my position requires me to lead the process of transition planning by forging partnerships with a variety of agencies, community partners, and stakeholders on behalf of my students to create meaningful educational opportunities and connections for transition education and support (Transition Guide, 2017). These relationships are necessary to ensure that the students I am working with are fully able to participate in the transition planning process (Scarborough and Gillbride, 2006).

To determine the best way to create these networks, I utilize formal and informal assessments, gather data on student strengths and needs, consider the students, family and team vision for the student's future, as well as consider the student's instructional needs (Morgan, Callow-Huesser, Horrocks, et. al., 2014). Synthesizing this information and then taking the lead on creating opportunities requires a cognitive ambidexterity seen in the characteristics of entrepreneurial leaders (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, & Wilson, 2013).

Further, entrepreneurial leaders are described as those who "are constantly networking, despite their independent nature," (Leonard, p. 13, 2013). Leonard goes on to say that "…they [Entrepreneurial Leaders] build partnerships and coalitions, not just within their own professional circle but across public, private and non-profit sectors" (Leonard, p. 13, 2013). This definition supports the expectations placed on Transition Specialists to complete a wide variety of tasks including creating relationships and establishing partnerships on behalf of students, developing educational opportunities both inside and beyond the walls of the classroom, meeting with families, attending IEP meetings, and disseminating information to school staff and community members (Morningstar, Nations-Miller, MacDonald, & Clavenna-Deane, 2009). Therefore, I utilize Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory in my theoretical framework.

When I became a Transition Specialist in 2008, I knew without a doubt that my past experiences in the private sector, coupled with my training in Special Education made me a great fit for this position. Self-Efficacy Theory specifically relates to a person's perception of his or her own skills and ability to reach a goal that he or she have set for him or herself

(Bandura, 1997). After further reading on Self-Efficacy Theory, I found that because of the independent nature of my work, coupled with the entrepreneurial nature of it, it would be logical to consider that the level of self-efficacy a person possesses may factor in to whether or not they are able to complete the duties expected in the role of Transition Specialist within Special Education.

Further, as outlined in Table 1, my position as Transition Specialist requires creating connections and developing ongoing collaborative relationships with a variety of stakeholders. These relationships and networks go beyond the student and include families, educators, community leaders, non-profit organizations, employers, and state agencies (Winchester Public Schools, 2014). To build these relationships, I am required to network with a variety of people housed both in and outside of the school system. I become the center of the social network in the process of transition planning for my students (Daly et. al., 2014). Due to this, I incorporated Social Networking Theory into my theoretical frame. It is evident that the role and space that I have in a student's network is important.

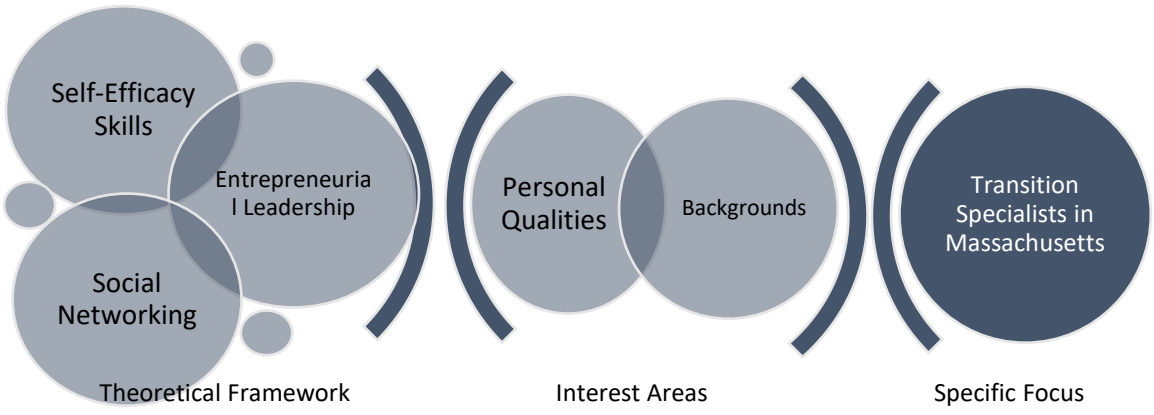

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework Utilized in My Study

In summary, the work of a Transition Specialist requires the ability to make connections and opportunities on behalf of students, have knowledge and competency in a variety of areas and create support networks on behalf of students (Transition Guide, 2017). By reviewing the existing scholarly literature on Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory I will be able to define each individually and expand upon their relevancy to the work of Transition Specialists in Secondary Special Education.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory and Related Literature. Entrepreneurial leaders in the business world are often described as confident, resilient, moral and ethically sound, and future oriented (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Presumably, they are leaders who are visionaries, using their abilities to shape opportunities and create value for those involved in their transactions (Middlebrooks, 2015; Leitch & Volery, 2017). The traits associated with entrepreneurial leadership can be particularly important for those working in the business world, but how does the entrepreneurial leadership spirit manifest in the world of Special Education? Specifically, in the role of a Transition Specialist in secondary Special Education?

Research centered on the types and styles of leadership, as well as the moral direction and obligations of leaders across disciplines has been examined for decades (Ciulla, 2003; Fernald, Solomon & Tarabishy, 2005; Chan, Uy, Chernyshenko, et. al., 2014). Leaders in the business world have been the primary focus of much of this work, though some scholars

in the field of educational leadership have translated this work into the business of education (Leonard, 2013).

As part of my theoretical framework, I am utilizing what is known about the entrepreneurial characteristics of business minded leaders in a unique way. Using the work of scholars focused on Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, I posit that there are connections between the specific characteristics of entrepreneurial business leaders and those who are working as Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education.

For over 20 years, scholars have been exploring the concept of entrepreneurial leadership. Renko, El Tarabishy et al. (2015) studied leadership and entrepreneurship, developing a definition of the concept which stated that entrepreneurial leaders influence and the direct the performance of a group of members towards the goals of an organization to achieve opportunities (Leitch & Volery, 2017). Further, through this work, a list of attributes was compiled that showcase the places where entrepreneurship and leadership intersect (Renko, El Tarabishy et al., 2015). This list of attributes presented as present in entrepreneurial leaders included:

> …vision, opportunity-focus, influence (on both followers and on a larger constituency), planning, motivating others, achievement orientation, creativity (of the leader as well as followers), flexibility, patience, persistence, risk-taking, high tolerance for ambiguity, tenacity, self-confidence, power orientation, pro-activeness, and internal locus of control. (Becherer, Mendenhall, & Eickhoff 2008; Cogliser & Brigham 2004; Fernald, Solomon,

& Tarabishy 2005; Thornberry 2006 as cited in Renko, El Tarabishy et al., 2015, p.56)

Though the attributes described were found to be present in leaders in a business-oriented setting, I argue that the same attributes found in entrepreneurial business leaders can be seen in Transition Specialists in Special Education. This is due to the nature of their work as well as the ways in which collaborative connections are built with state run human service agencies, families, employers, higher education institutions and employers on behalf of the students that they are working with (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).

In addition to ensuring students are being taught the skills needed for a successful transition to adult life (Test, Fowler, et al., 2009), Transition Specialists must forge into the community to connect to businesses and successfully create relationships for students as well as provide supports and information to families (CEC, 2013). These connections are meaningful and lead to the betterment of the community as well as make a difference in the lives of the student who is the reason for this work. This phenomenon of creating betterment, not only of the community, but of the lives of others is found in examination of entrepreneurial leadership as well (Dean & Ford, 2017).

Li, Bassett, and Hutchinson (2009) examined the specific involvement Special Educators in secondary education have with transition planning process. Through their qualitative study, it was identified that Transition Specialists are often engaged with the community and report a high level of involvement in interagency collaboration, job development and the overall transition planning process (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).

I suggest that some, if not all, of the same personal attributes cited by Ranko, El Tarabishy, et al. (2015) as present in entrepreneurial leaders must be present in Transition Specialist in Special Education for them to complete the required competencies of their work (CEC, 2013). Transition Specialists must take on the personal attributes of entrepreneurial leaders to make meaningful connections within new and existing community-based networks (Leonard, 2013) on behalf of their students. This expectation translates into action.

When engaged in work within the community, I identify potential opportunities for students and create new connections and at times, even new networks of support. It is expected as part of my job duties (Winchester Public Schools, 2014) that I will act as a conduit between students with disabilities and their families to the community at large. To do this, I have to be able to turn the student's ideas and plans into something material through a coordinated set of activities involving not only the school, but families, community partners and state human service agencies (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). The notion of expanding educational connections to create school-community partnerships is an important element of entrepreneurial leadership in education (Leonard, 2013).

Using this same methodology and approach, entrepreneurial leaders turn passion into ideas and ultimately outcomes that will meet the needs of the school (Leonard, 2013) or in my case, the student. By activating their entrepreneurial leadership skills, Transition Specialists are able to see beyond the school and look to the community to create partnerships designed to prepare students for the transition into adult life while at the same

time creating a value for the organization they work for (Middlebrooks, 2015) and providing ongoing betterment for the lives of others and the community at large (Dean & Ford, 2017).

It is my position that by utilizing the lens of Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, that it can be seen how the enterprising spirit of a Transition Specialist is utilized to create innovative partnerships for students with disabilities. By utilizing this spirit in my own work, it gives me the ability to create new and innovative partnerships for students and our school community (Leonard, 2013). It also allows me to deal with change and challenges in the same manner that those who are entrepreneurs in business situations do (Middlebrooks, 2015).

It is important to note that entrepreneurialism can be confused with transformational leadership because of the similarities. It's crucial to make this delineation because though the work of a Transition Specialist can be considered transformational, it's not. I argue that the type of leadership enacted by my colleagues and I is purely entrepreneurial in nature.

Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, and Wilson (2011) defined entrepreneurial leaders as "…individuals who, through an understanding of themselves and the contexts in which they work, act on and shape opportunities that create value for their organizations, their stakeholders, and the wider society" (p.2).

I posit that if you replace "that create value for their organization, their stakeholders and the wider society" in Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, and Wilson's (2011) definition with "that create a complex and coordinated transition plan for a student with a disability, their

family and IEP Team as well as the wider society" it is apparent that Transition Specialists are comparable in nature to entrepreneurial leaders.

Additionally, Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2013) defined the principles by which entrepreneurial leaders conduct business, which further supports the position of a Transition Specialist as an entrepreneurial leader. Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2013) discuss entrepreneurial leaders as those who possess three distinct principles which give them this title and differentiate them from other types of leaders. Specifically, they state that an entrepreneurial leader has cognitive ambidexterity, a commitment to social, environmental and economic value creation and a self-awareness, starting with who I am (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet & Wilson, 2013).

Leonard (2013) states that entrepreneurs in the school setting are also exhibiting these traits. Citing that they must spot potential issues and find ways around them, entrepreneurial leaders in education must push themselves to think outside of the standard school space to create ongoing educational opportunities with community partners and service agencies (Leonard, 2013). The basic tenets of the two align.

Cognitive Ambidexterity is defined as the ability to "integrate two diverse ways of making decisions into a single approach to pursuing opportunity" (Greenberg, Mckone-Sweet & Wilson, 2013, p. 2). Specifically, Greenberg, Mckone-Sweet, and Wilson (2013) are referring to the ability that entrepreneurial leaders have to utilize predictive logic skills coupled with creative logic skills. Stating that an entrepreneurial leader knows when each of these would be appropriate and is able to use both of these types of thinking when solving

problems. Essentially, being able to calculate the level of risk in a given situation, predict the desired outcome and ultimately choose a course of action based on what may or may not happen is a hallmark of entrepreneurial leadership (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet & Wilson, 2013).

The fifth competency outlined by the CEC (2013) is entitled "Collaboration" (p. 7). The skills outlined in this competency are designed to create partnerships to improve post-secondary outcomes through ongoing collaboration. Some of the specific skills outlined include the ability to coordinate agreements with agencies, communicate with employers to create networks and partnerships, and coordinate work-based learning programs including paid work experiences, internships and work-study programs (CEC, 2013).

In my work, I utilize cognitive ambidexterity to accomplish this task for every student I work with. As part of my job description and duties (Winchester Public Schools, 2014) I am responsible for the creation and ongoing oversight of a School to Work Program community-based internship program for students with disabilities. This program is multi-faceted and supports students with a variety of levels of skill who range in ability and need and creates a school-community partnership (Leonard, 2013). Simply put, I reach out to local businesses and non-profit organizations, some whom have connections to the school, as well as some whom do not. I ask these organizations to consider taking on a student intern, who will be supported through me, my program, and school staff that I supervise. Based on the response of the business leaders, the varying needs of their business and student needs, I

need to constantly rely on my cognitive ambidexterity (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, & Wilson, 2013) to determine how to proceed.

If a business is a warm lead (meaning they are connected to the school in some way, perhaps through a personal connection of someone I work with) I then consider them low risk and can use more of a predictive logic strategy to leverage the relationship and create a partnership that will become an element of my educational program. If the business is a cold lead (meaning they are not connected to the school) then I must consider the risk and use an active approach or creative logic to best grow the relationship. There are also times where I need to employ both strategies (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet & Wilson, 2013).

The entire process of creating community based educational programming centered on developing pre-vocational and work related skills requires continual usage of my cognitive ambidexterity and is considered an important, needed element of transition planning for students with disabilities (Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walther-Thomas, 2019). Without my ability to collaborate to create educational partnerships in community based environments (CEC, 2013) coupled with the skill to think both predictively and creatively (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet & Wilson, 2013) I would not be able to create opportunities for students.

The second principle as outlined by Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2013) is a commitment to value creation not only for the community, but in larger environmental and economic contexts. They state that entrepreneurial leaders working under this principle are "driven by their commitment to social, environmental, and economic responsibility and

sustainability (SEERS)" (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet & Wilson, 2013, p. 4). Similarly, Leonard (2013) highlights that entrepreneurial leaders in education are driven by similar tenets, not only responsibility to students, but a desire to better the school and community as well. I argue that many educators, enter this field because of a commitment and a sense of responsibility to their community.

When I defined my positionality in Chapter 1, I touched upon the level of responsibility I feel as an educator. I do this work because of a deep sense of commitment to the idea of assisting and guiding students with disabilities into a future where they will be a valued member of their communities participating in vocational and social activities. I embody Principle Two as defined by Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2013) in my work as a Transition Specialist. Further, my positionality and sense of responsibility also aligns with Leonard's (2013) definition of an entrepreneur in an educational setting. It is expected that to be an educator you have sense of responsibility to better the lives of the students you teach and in turn to better the community at large, creating value and making a difference in the lives of others (Dean & Ford, 2017).

Principle Three outlined by Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2013) focuses on self-awareness, starting with the idea of knowing who you are. Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2013) states that:

> Entrepreneurial leaders need to know who they are, what drives them, and what they are passionate about if they are to use a cognitively ambidextrous approach or if they are to advocate a commitment to shared values. If past experience cannot be used to

> predict the future, leaders must rely on something else. This something else is their understanding of themselves and of those around them. (p. 5)

The concept of understanding what drives you, combined with knowledge of your own positionality in the transition planning process is a crucial element to facilitating effective partnerships (Barnes & Bullock, 1995). Specifically, the process of facilitating and developing partnerships with community-based organizations, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and other stakeholders will lead to better post-secondary outcomes for students (DeFur & Taymans, 1995; Scarborough & Gilbride, 2006; Test, Fowler, Richter et. al, 2009). The advanced competencies, skills, and duties outlined for Transition Specialists (CEC, 2013) demonstrate the expectation that Transition Specialists will straddle the line between the school system and the community (DeFur & Taymans, 1995, Asselin, Todd-Allen, DeFur, 1998; Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009; Reisen, Morgan, Schultz & Kupferman, 2014). Further, Transition Specialists are also expected to understand disability related needs and have a strong knowledge base of how their role should be performed to incorporate a multi-faceted, inclusive and community-based approach (Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009).

In summary, I argue that knowing who you are and what you are passionate about as well as possessing a demonstrated understanding of the duties and competencies needed to be a Transition Specialist is key to successfully supporting students in through the transition planning process (DCDT, 2000; Morningstar, Kim, & Clark, 2008; CEC, 2013; Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson, 2013). By embracing passion and knowing how to work towards creating positive and innovative opportunities for student learning that

entrepreneurial leadership in education can truly be enacted in daily practice to the benefit of the school and community (Leonard, 2013).

Self-Efficacy Theory and Related Literature. A teacher's self-efficacy is defined as "a teacher's individual belief in their capability to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a given specified situation (Dellinger et al., 2007, p. 2). This definition is aligns with Bandura's (1977; 1993) definition of perceived self-efficacy, which refers to a person's intrinsic belief in their own ability that they possess the needed skills to complete specific series of organized tasks to achieve the desired outcome (Bandura, 1986). However, it is important to note that self-efficacy is not a reflection of a person's personality. Personality is thought to be a stable set of intrinsic traits where self-efficacy can vary with situation and expected tasks (Klassen & Tse, 2014). As a Transition Specialist, I posit that my perceived level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) has guided my practice and allowed me to turn potentially difficult tasks and situations into positive, learning experiences that have led to success in my role (Pomeroy & Clark, 2015).

Logically, it would make sense that when a teacher has a higher sense of self-efficacy that their own teaching practice would be better, and in turn, lead to higher levels of student engagement (Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, & Benson, 2010; Kass, 2015). Considering the individualized, complex, and diverse knowledge and skills required of those working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists (CEC, 2013) I believe that possessing strong self-efficacy skills are crucial to be effective in this role.

Examination of Transition Personnel Preparation Programs (Morningstar, Kim, & Clark, 2008; Morningstar & Benitez, 2013; Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, Teo, Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2018) found that if teachers believed that they possessed the needed knowledge and skills to guide students and families through the transition planning process, they were more likely to complete required tasks and incorporate them in their practice. Research has also shown that strong self-efficacy skills in teachers will influence a teacher's persistence to work with more challenging student and situations and can influence enthusiasm, job satisfaction and effectiveness (Klassen & Tse, 2012).

Thereby, if a Transition Specialist does not possess a strong sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), it may prove difficult for them to effectively guide the transition planning process on behalf of their students. This comes down to their perceived abilities to complete multi-faceted complex tasks (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), but it also speaks to the importance of what and how the knowledge and skills needed in this role are taught in teacher preparation programs for Special Educators who are working as secondary Transition Specialists (Flexer, Simmons, & Tankersley, 1997; Morningstar, Kim, & Clark, 2009; Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, Teo, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2018). When a Special Education Transition Specialists is properly prepared, outcomes for students are can be improved upon, families, the community, and other stakeholders could be more involved, and they may become more committed to their practice (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Podell & Soodak, 1993; Rosenholtz, Bassler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 1989; Ware & Kitsantis, 2007 as cited by Viel-Ruma et al., 2010).

As I stated previously in this chapter, I firmly believe that Transition Specialists are entrepreneurial leaders in education (Leonard, 2013). When speaking about education reform, Daly et al. (2015) stated that "educational leaders need to not only believe they can craft the vision, set direction, and develop the team, but also have the confidence to manage the change itself" (p. 244). This definition of an educational leader aligns with the knowledge and skills outlined for secondary Special Education Transition Specialists (CEC, 2013). Much of the work outlined involves working to develop student vision, build a team of support, and manage the process of actual transition with students from high school to post-secondary life (CEC, 2013).

Based on the knowledge and skills outlined for a Special Education Transition Specialist (CEC, 2013) it is evident that they are expected to perform a variety of multi-faceted complex actions within the school setting and in the greater community. Research has shown that at times secondary Special Education Transition Specialists are designing and supervising learning environments, while at other times they are providing direct instruction to students, interacting with school based educational teams including families, school staff, and human service agencies as well as providing resources to families for planning purposes (Kohler, 1996; Benitez, Morningstar & Frey, 2009; Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009; CEC 2013, Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, et. al, 2018). Due to the varied nature of the work, it has been found that when a Special Educator does not feel prepared and in turn, able to complete the tasks required of their position that they may not be able to effectively

implement transition services for students with disabilities (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009; Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, et. al., 2018).

Benitez, Morningstar, and Frey (2009) surveyed Special Education Teachers' to determine their perceptions of their Transition Competencies. Through this quantitative study, a survey was utilized to determine if secondary Special Educators feel prepared to deliver transition services. Using an educational marketing database to gain access to a sample group, Benitez, Morningstar and Frey (2009) surveyed a random sample of 1,800 secondary Special Educators who were involved in the transition planning process across thirty-one states.

Ultimately, the research sample included staff members who worked with students with a variety of disabilities. The survey was broken into two parts – one to examine demographic data and the other, to specifically look at perceived levels of preparation, satisfaction and frequency in which respondents performed forty-six transition planning activities (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009). The results of this survey provide some insight into the self-efficacy beliefs of Special Educators working within secondary education who are also participating in the process of transition planning.

Responses indicated that "teachers feel less prepared and confident to implement collaboration activities that include coordinating with outside agencies, providing information to families about agencies, and participating in community level planning" (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009, p. 13) stating at times that they may not implement these competencies because they do not feel confident in their skills. It is also important to

note that Benitez, Morningstar and Frey (2009) go on to say that "higher education faculty have also identified interagency collaboration as the area in which they felt least qualified to teach…" (Anderson et al., 2003; Becker, Staab & Morningstar, 1995 as cited by Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009, p. 13).

Secondary Special Educators need to build and utilize self-efficacy skills to communicate effectively with all stakeholders as part of the transition planning process. In a study conducted by Viel-Ruma et al. (2010) efficacy beliefs of Special Educators were examined. This study was designed to examine the correlation between job satisfaction, collective efficacy and self-efficacy. Using an urban southeastern school district, Viel-Ruma et al. (2010) surveyed Special Educators working in a variety of grades and settings.

Through this quantitative study, Viel-Ruma et al. (2010) found results that supported the findings of Benitez, Morningstar and Frey (2009). They found that self-efficacy and job satisfaction were tied together and recommended that districts consider professional development to increase Special Educator self-efficacy and in turn, potentially increase satisfaction, performance and attrition rates of Special Educators (Viel-Ruma et al., 2010).

Viel-Ruma et al. (2010) found that there is a need for self-efficacy skills in Special Education staff. It was also found that there is a need to train staff on how to build their self-efficacy beliefs. But, how does this connect to Transition Specialists in Massachusetts?

In April 2013, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education hosted a Secondary Transition Capacity Building Conference with the intention of

helping districts state-wide become more knowledgeable about best practices in the field of Transition Planning as well as build confidence in how to implement these practices. At this conference, presenters spoke about how they implemented practices that supported student transition planning. I, along with Joanne Baldasarri of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, presented an hour-long lecture centered on the building of our partnership (Callison & Baldassari, 2013).

This presentation highlighted how my perceived self-efficacy skills (Bandura, 1977; 1993) were the factor which led me to build and maintain a working partnership with a community stakeholder to create positive connections for students with disabilities. Through the power-point we presented, I discussed how as a new Transition Specialist I reached out to the state agencies like the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Department of Developmental Services and others, confident that we needed to build relationships to support students. Highlighting the importance of creating interagency partnership (DeFur & Taymans, 1995; Scarborough & Gilbride; 2009).

Because of my high level of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) in my role as Transition Specialist, I reached out to build interagency collaboration despite receiving no training on how to do it (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009; Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, et. al. 2018). I believed in my ability to create these partnerships and continued to persist until my efforts yielded the results that would best support student transition outcomes (Bandura, 1977). It was through utilizing efficacious behaviors that I was able to effectively do my job and support the students I work with.

In conclusion, I argue that having a developed sense of self-efficacy is crucial to taking on and succeeding at completing the complex tasks required of a Special Education Transition Specialist (CEC, 2013). This skill allows for the completion of complex tasks to reach a desired outcome that in this case, leads to creating opportunities for students with disabilities in the transition planning process. Not only does this embody the entrepreneurial spirit and enhance the community (Leonard, 2013), but also creates networks of support that extend beyond the school walls and can carry on into the future.

Social Networking Theory and Related literature. Social Networking Theory describes the patterns of social ties between people or at least two groups working together within a network to achieve a common goal (Muijs, West, & Ainscow, 2010; Daly et al., 2015). As previously noted in both this chapter as well as chapter 1, networking savvy is a skill that was identified by Tilson and Simonsen (2013) as present in successful employment specialists. Though much of the research in the field of education conducted around social networking focuses on educational leadership, it is important to note that there is also a need for social networking skills in other areas of education. Considering the parallel role of a Transition Specialist to that of an employment specialist, I assert that networking skills are also present in and necessary for this position.

Table 1 illustrated that much of the knowledge, skills and duties of a Transition Specialist (CEC, 2013) require the ability to utilize social networking skills. Scholarly research centered on Transition Specialists consistently reveals that practitioners in the field report spending a large portion of their time utilizing their networking skills to create

connections for their students (Scarborough & Gilbride, 2006; Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009; Shogren & Plotner, 2012; Tetreault, S, 2015). Further, as I referenced previously in this chapter, my presentation during a statewide conference (Callison & Baldassari, 2013) highlighted not only my perceived level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), but also the fact that I was able to actively network with partners at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) to create a lasting relationship that would support my students in the transition planning process (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009).

Research highlighting and outlining the importance of creating social networks in the transition planning process is rich. Morningstar, Kim, and Clark (2009) focused on transition teacher preparation programs and found that Transition Specialists consistently stated that social networking is a crucial element of their work. During focus group discussions as part of Morningstar, Kim, and Clark's (2009) qualitative study, themes emerged that included the assertion that collaborating and networking with colleagues was essential to their roles. Additionally, Tetreault (2015) found that to ensure a unified approach to supporting students is taken, collaboration and creation of networks between schools and local organizations is necessary.

Further, in a study focusing on Finnish Part-Time Special Educators (Tuomainen, Palonen & Hakkarinen, 2012) the ways in which networks are enacted and the importance of these networks was examined. This study looked at the internal and external roles Special Educators were positioned in networks needed to support their students. Specifically, Tuomainen, Palonen, and Hakkarinen (2012) focused on communication and how they

perceived their roles within the networks that they were a part of. Through this qualitative study, it was identified that Special Educators are part of a variety of internal and external school and education related networks that assisted students with accessing curriculum materials, gaining and receiving medical services, and sharing information with parents (Tuomainen, Palonen, & Hakkarinen, 2012).

Due to my positionality as a Transition Specialist within the field of Special Education, I am the central actor in the transition process for students and families. Daly et al. (2014) posit that "Individuals who occupy a central position may have greater opportunities to access diverse resources as she/he has a larger number of social ties to other actors" (p. 237). This is relevant to my work as I am considered the expert in my field within my district. Further, as the only secondary Transition Specialist in the Winchester Public Schools, I own the central position within networks designed to support transition planning for students with disabilities. This makes my position in the social network as well as my ability to build and move within a variety of networks even more pivotal to my role.

I am responsible for acting as the connector and keeper of the inflow and outflow of information on behalf of students in multi-agency groups (Muijs, West, & Ainscow, 2010). Further, this means that managing and creating the partnerships built through social networks is a key element to the work of a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist. Kaehne and Beyer (2009), examined the concept of creating and managing transition partnerships and intergroup connections. More specifically, Kaehne and Beyer (2009) examined the way "relevant organizations define their role and what they see as the shortcomings of

arrangements in the transition partnership work" (p. 112). All respondents in Kaehne and Beyer's (2009) study felt that the key to successful transitions for students was to assign task managers (Transition Specialists) to coordinate the services between school, with parents and with relevant organizations.

This notion of coordination falls directly in line with the findings of Tilson and Simonsen (2013) and their discovery that networking savvy is a personal attribute seen in successful employment specialists working with transition aged-youth. Through focus groups and discussion, employment specialists surveyed revealed that they feel networking is an important part of their work (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013). Without having the ability to network and build relationships connected to that network, the coordination of the transition process may not happen and can result in a barrier to effective transition planning.

Tilson and Simonsen characterized their participants as "having the ability to connect with people and resources to create and access opportunities for youth" (Tilson & Simonson, p. 133, 2013). Respondents revealed that they became active participants in community organizations like the chamber of commerce, business organizations and used networking connections of colleagues when needed to create employment opportunities. But what happens when Transition Specialists do not have the social networking skills to create these connections and collaborations? Is the process as effective?

For many students who are transitioning from high school to adult life, the vocational component of their transition is the piece where the social networking skills of the Transition Specialist are most important (Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walther-Thomas, 2019). But

social networking skills are also the area that Transition Specialists need to most guidance to build.

Riesen, Morgan, Schultz and Kupferman (2014) surveyed Utah Special Educators, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists and Community Rehabilitation Providers who work with transition age youth around the development of vocational and career related skills as well as functional daily living skills needed for life after high school. Their findings were intriguing and support the need for social networking skills as a Transition Specialist. Through this quantitative study, sixteen barrier areas were identified. It was found that networking skills or lack thereof on the part of Special Educators was considered a high impact barrier in the school to work component of transition for students with disabilities.

Specifically, Reisen, Morgan, Schultz, and Kupferman (2014) found that Special Educators working in this role do not always have the time or skills to create meaningful networks and connections for intra-agency collaboration and planning. Further Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman & Walther-Thomas (2019) found that despite federal mandates emphasizing these partnerships be created, school personnel and community-based employers are not always connected. Nor do the people working as Transition Specialists fully understand or know how to activate their own social networking skills on behalf of their students. Both of these studies reinforce the need for social networking skills in the role of a Transition Specialist in Special Education.

Ultimately, by utilizing the lens of Social Networking Theory to frame the work of a Transition Specialist speaks directly to their interdependent positionality within a network of

professionals sharing resources (Daly et al., 2014). I posit that networking skills should be viewed as a key personal quality needed in a Transition Specialist in Special Education. By activating and utilizing social networking skills, a Transition Specialist can become an active participant within a variety of social networks designed to foster interagency relationships, create opportunities, and develop lasting partnerships. Ideally, these social networks can be activated and create supports that may lead to positive outcomes for students and organizations (Muijs, West, & Ainscow, 2010).

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the theoretical framework I utilized in my research draws upon a trio of theories. By framing my work through the theoretical lenses of Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory, I illuminate the unique nature of the work conducted by secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. Additionally, I utilized my own experiences, coupled with the works of scholars to demonstrate the ways in which these theories are visible and active within my own practice.

Utilizing theory, personal experience, and scholarly research to guide me, I designed the research protocols, instruments, and methodology that is discussed in Chapter 3. I connected the theory to a larger state-wide context and further showcased the backgrounds and personal qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the specific competencies and job-related duties required of Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education have been examined and well-defined (Kohler, 1996; Benitez, Morningstar & Frey, 2009; CEC, 2013). Additionally, there is no question among scholars in the field of Special Education what tasks a Transition Specialist is charged to complete in their work with students and families in secondary education (Kohler, 1996; Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009; Morgan, Callow-Heusser, Horrocks, et. al, 2014).

However, there is a gap in the literature. Little information is known specifically about the people who are drawn to become Transition Specialists within secondary Special Education. It is only in the adjacent field of Vocational Rehabilitation where scholars have examined the personal attributes of employment specialists who work with transition-age youth and dig deeper into what personal attributes and qualities those people possess (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013).

Tilson and Simonsen (2013) found that despite a high turnover rate among employment specialists in vocational rehabilitation, little research had been conducted to determine the personal attributes of those who were successful in the field. To learn more about the personal attributes possessed by successful people in the vocational rehabilitation field, Tilson and Simonsen (2013) conducted in-depth interviews with multiple people who worked in a nationally operated program called Bridges from School to Work as employment specialists. The goal of their work was to discover what personal attributes those working as employment specialists have that make them successful when working with transition-aged youth.

Through their interviews with selected staff at the Bridges from School to Work Program, Tilson and Simonsen (2013) found that successful employment specialists in the Bridges program possessed four attributes: networking savvy, cultural competence, principled optimism and business-oriented professionalism. Further, Tilson and Simonsen (2013) identified that though they only interviewed staff in one program, that their work could be generalized to those in other fields including "community rehabilitation provider agencies and school transition specialists charged with developing work experiences and paid employment" (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013, p. 135). Despite them citing this generalization in their work, no subsequent studies have been conducted in the field of Special Education research that fill this void.

This study fills this gap within the field of Special Education research by examining the educational and professional backgrounds as well as the professional qualities of

secondary Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Utilizing quantitative methodology to collect data from those working in the role of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists across the state of Massachusetts, this comparative study employs both descriptive and correlational methods to capture the relationship between the educational and employment histories and professional qualities of this group of people. Additionally, this study endeavors to discover how the backgrounds and qualities of Transition Specialists impact their ability to complete the duties required of this position.

Further, this study is the first of this type in the field of special education research. It is designed to gather a large data set and examine specific qualities utilizing the theoretical framework of Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Networking Theory as the guiding lens. All of which were discussed in Chapter two. Despite utilizing quantitative methods to gather data, it is important to note that the development of the theoretical framework used in this study is based on my own position as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist. Additionally, the focus of this study was inspired by the qualitative work conducted by Tilson and Simonsen (2013). Through my study I gain insight into the people who are working in the field of Special Education as Transition Specialists, not purely gain knowledge about the specific duties they complete as part of their positions.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the history of the position of Transition Specialist in Special Education on both a national and state level (DCDT, 2000; Massachusetts Legislature, 2012; CEC 2013). Literature went into great detail about the competencies

required to perform the work-related tasks of a Transition Specialist (Kohler, 1996; DCDT, 2000; Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009; CEC 2013). I also explained the situational context and rationale of this proposed study, providing details about my positionality as a Transition Specialist in Special Education and my journey into this unique position.

Chapter 2 further expanded the scope of this study by examining the trio of theories that support and frame it. Using Transition Specialists competencies (CEC, 2013; Winchester Public Schools, 2014) as well as the inspiration I drew from the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013), I explained the rationale behind the development of my theoretical framework. I provided discussion and examination of each theory and its relevance to the position of a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist.

In this chapter, I provide a detailed explanation of the quantitative methodology employed in this study. I also present the rationale behind my research design and the decision to use a quantitative study model. I explain the context, identify the participants, and present steps for data collection and analysis. Further, I discuss the instrument I created, and the measures taken to ensure validity and reliability.

Overarching Research Question

This research was guided by one question and supported by four sub questions:

What are the professional and educational backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts and how do their entrepreneurial

leadership skills, perceived level of self-efficacy, and aptitude for social networking impact their ability to complete the duties required of this position?

Sub-Questions

a) What are the educational and professional backgrounds of Transition Specialists?
b) To what level do Transition Specialists act as entrepreneurial leaders in their work?
c) How do Transition Specialists perceive their level of self-efficacy in their work?
d) To what extent does their aptitude for social networking influence a Transition Specialists' abilities in their work?

Research Methodology

In order to explore and define the connection between the educational and professional backgrounds as well as the intrinsic professional qualities of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts a descriptive, correlational, quantitative methodology was utilized in this study. This methodology allowed for specific variables in the data set to be compared (Hoy & Adams, 2016).

Additionally, by using a descriptive, correlational methodology, the data set was able to be analyzed fully and thoroughly. It allowed me to examine the relationship between my theoretical framework and reality of the work completed by secondary Special Education Transition Specialists (Nardi, 2003). In addition, this methodology allowed for the data to tell its story through description of variables, a variety of statistical tests, and analysis (Mis, 2013). Specifically, using this method I examined the relationship between the educational

and professional backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. Further correlation was done to also examine the connection between the intrinsic professional qualities of Transition Specialists and their impact on their ability to complete the duties of this position.

Rationale for Research Methodology

Despite drawing inspiration from the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013) it is important to note that my study does not simply replicate their work. I was inspired by the connection they noted between employment specialists in the field of vocational rehabilitation and the work of Transition Specialists in Special Education (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013) so much so that I desired to learn more about my counterparts doing this work. To that end, I decided to conduct a study that not only examined the educational and professional backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists, but also investigated how specific intrinsic qualities of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts impacted their ability to complete the duties required in this role.

In designing my study, I considered which research methodology would best fit my goals. I knew that I wanted to learn more about my peers in secondary Special Education who are identified as Transition Specialists. I also considered my personal epistemology as a self-identified positivist who operates from a modern paradigmatic world view. Specifically, this was impactful because I am a career Transition Specialist in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I've done this work for over a decade and know many of the people in my or

similar roles across the state through professional organizations and statewide groups, which could have an influence on my study.

As I considered my professional positionality, I examined the potential research methodologies that I could use to create my study. I researched qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods designs to gain insight on how each would fit with my worldview and vision for my study (Creswell, 2009). After careful consideration of each method, I decided to utilize a quantitative approach.

My reasoning for this choice was based in how the research process is conducted in each method and the generalizability of my work post completion. Using a quantitative approach protected my positionality in the research process. It allowed for me, as the researcher, to remain more detached from the research and maximize the objectivity of my work (Muijs, 2011). Using qualitative or mixed methods approaches to gathering data would allow for my positionality to interfere more and potentially lead to bias in the research (Creswell, 2009, Muijs, 2011). Specifically, by conducting interviews, examining phenomena, or conducting observations, as is commonly done in qualitative research, would have put me in the research, not conducting it (Creswell, 2009). This type of approach did not align with my desire to mitigate the effects of my positionality in this study.

Further, I felt that using a qualitative or mixed methods approach may impact my study in its potential to be generalized and built upon (Creswell, 2009). These methods also do not allow for a larger data set to be examined (Nardi, 2003). Due to these limitations I felt it necessary to conduct my study using solely quantitative methodology.

By employing quantitative methodology, I was able to survey a large sample (Creswell, 2009). As my goal was to gather information for descriptive and correlational analysis, I decided to employ a self-administered questionnaire. Using this methodology allowed for gathering responses from a large group of people, which meant I could expand the scope of my study and utilize the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as the landscape for my work.

As discussed in Chapter 1, my desire to conduct this study is to add to the body of research in the field of transition. I also envision the results of my study informing both hiring practices for Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education as well as provide insight into candidates who may be applying to post-secondary programs designed to prepare people to become Transition Specialists. Using a quantitative method to survey a large sample of Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts allowed for more data to be collected, analyzed (Creswell, 2009) and generate empirical information that can be generalized across settings (Hoy & Adams, 2006).

Research Context and Participants

Context. As previously stated, this study took place in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A self-administered questionnaire was sent to Special Education Departments in all 463 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016) public secondary schools, all Special Education collaboratives and Chapter 766 approved Special Education Schools across the Commonwealth.

Participants. For this study, my intended participants were those who are employed or acting as the Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education settings in Massachusetts. Specifically, in public secondary schools, all Special Education collaboratives and Chapter 766 approved Special Education Schools across the Commonwealth. However, it is important to be aware of the legalities related to this position. It is not required to secondary Transition Specialist on staff to provide mandated transition services to students with disabilities (Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009). Therefore, some school districts, Special Education Collaboratives and Chapter 766 approved school settings do not employ a stand-alone Transition Specialist. In some settings, the duties of a Transition Specialist are split between multiple people with the Special Education department or school (Benitez, Morningstar and Frey, 2009). This made it more difficult to ensure the proper person within the secondary school receives and can complete the questionnaire. To address this limitation, my study included measures to ensure the correct person is listed as the contact for each targeted school. These measures will be outlined later in this chapter.

Research Instrument

The data included in my study was collected using a self-administered questionnaire that I designed (Appendix A). As previously stated in this chapter, this research targeted those employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Specifically, those who employed at one of the 463 Massachusetts public secondary schools, Special Education Collaboratives, and/or Chapter 766 approved Special Education schools. This two-part questionnaire gathered information on the level of

entrepreneurial leadership skills, self-efficacy, and social networking skills each respondent believes they have as well as their educational backgrounds and employment histories.

It is important to note that I designed the questionnaire for my study because there has not been another study done that has examined these specific skills and beliefs within this community. Due to this, I needed to design an instrument that could connect with respondents and capture their beliefs (Bandura, 2006). Further, I needed to create a scale that related my theoretical framework outlined in chapter two to the specific duties conducted by secondary Special Education Transition Specialists (CEC, 2013; Winchester Public Schools, 2014). It was by using my own background knowledge and experience I outlined in chapter one that I was able to design the questionnaire used.

The first part of the questionnaire utilized the theoretical framework discussed in chapter two. The trio of theories guiding my study, entrepreneurial leadership theory, self-efficacy theory, and social networking theory framed statements for respondents using a Likert Scale rating system. The second part of the questionnaire employed a combination of open ended and multiple-choice questions that asked respondents to answer specific questions to gather demographic data and background information on employment and educational histories (Creswell, 2009).

In part 1 of the questionnaire there are a total of 39 belief statements. Of the 39 statements, five of them featured sub statements. These sub statements were necessary where specific tasks outlined in the statement required a variable to be incorporated (CEC, 2013). A Likert scale system was used for each of the statements. This was done to measure

the intensity of respondents' personal belief on their effectiveness and abilities to complete the specific task named in each statement (Nardi, 2003) . Respondents were directed to indicate one of four ratings; 1 = To a Great Extent, 2 = To Some Extent, 3 = Very Little, 4 = Not at All. Each statement measured the respondents belief in their own skills as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist and are aligned with the theoretical framework employed in my study (Asselin, Todd-Allen, DeFur, 1998; DeFur & Taymans, 1995; DCDT, 2000; Kaehne & Beyer, 2009; Kohler, 1996; Kohler & Field, 2003; CEC 2013). Table 2 features three of the five research sub-questions, specifically sub-questions C, D and E, and demonstrates how each of them relates to the belief statements in part one of my questionnaire as well as the theoretical framework that is aligned with each.

Table 2

Research Questions, Belief Statements, and Theoretical Connections

Overarching Research Question: What are the educational and professional backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists and how do their entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived level of self-efficacy, and aptitude for social networking impact their ability to complete the duties required of this position?
Theory: Entrepreneurial Leadership Sub-Question C: To what level do Transition Specialists act as entrepreneurial leaders in their work? 1. I look to find ways to improve transitionally based programs within my school setting. 2. I look to find opportunities to grow transitionally based programs within my school setting. 3. I strive to create new and innovative ways to provide students with transitionally appropriate educational experiences based on their individual needs. 4. I am able to see problems within my work and turn them into opportunities.

5. I work independently.
6. I am easily discouraged by my failures at work.
7. I turn failures at work into new opportunities.
8. I don't take "no" for an answer in my work.
9. I adjust my work when I find something I am doing isn't working.
10. I take various perspectives into account in my work.
11. I follow rules set forth by my school and/or school district.
12. I think critically and creatively at the same time.
13. I focus on the steps needed to reach a desired outcome based on the facts given.

Theory: Self-Efficacy Theory

Sub-Question D: How do Transition Specialists perceive their level of self-efficacy in their work?

1. I believe I can effectively execute all the duties outlined in my job description.
2. I believe I can act as the liaison between my school, my students and:
    - The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)
    - The Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
    - The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH)
    - The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB)
    - The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)
    - The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF)
3. I believe I can develop partnerships with local businesses to create pre-vocational and internship opportunities for:
    - Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Students with Developmental Delays
    - Students with Intellectual Impairments
    - Students with Sensory Impairments (Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairments, Deafblind)
    - Students with Neurological Impairments
    - Students with Emotional Impairments
    - Students with Communication Impairments
    - Students with Physical Impairments
    - Students with Health Impairments
    - Students with Specific Learning Disabilities
4. I believe I am knowledgeable about the Chapter 688 Referral Process in Massachusetts.
5. I believe I can clearly articulate the steps needed to file and follow up on a Chapter 688 Referral for a student.
6. I believe I can clearly explain my job-related duties to Special Education staff members.

7. I believe I can clearly describe my job-related duties to General Education staff members.
8. I believe I am capable of clearly and concisely discussing the transition planning process in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings for:
    - Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Students with Developmental Delays
    - Students with Intellectual Impairments
    - Students with Sensory Impairments (Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairments, Deafblind)
    - Students with Neurological Impairments
    - Students with Emotional Impairments
    - Students with Health Impairments
    - Students with Specific Learning Disabilities
9. I believe I can build partnerships with local non-profit organizations to create experiential learning opportunities as needed.
10. I believe I can concisely explain my purpose and student needs to local business leaders during the process of creating experiential learning opportunities.
11. I believe I can concisely explain my purpose and student needs to non-profit organization management during the process of creating experiential learning opportunities.
12. I believe I am knowledgeable about post-secondary education options that I discuss with students and families.
13. I believe I am knowledgeable about post-secondary employment options that I discuss with students and families.
14. I believe I am knowledgeable about post-secondary community living and recreation options that I discuss with students and families.
15. I believe I can clearly explain the post-secondary transition planning process to students and families based on their:
    - Individual disability related needs
    - Individual socio-economic situation
    - Student's post-secondary vision statement
16. I believe I can explain the resources available to students through state funded post-secondary service agencies for:
    - Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Students with Developmental Delays
    - Students with Intellectual Impairments
    - Students with Sensory Impairments (Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairments, Deafblind)
    - Students with Neurological Impairments
    - Students with Emotional Impairments
    - Students with Health Impairments

- Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Theory: Social Networking

Sub-Question E: To what does their aptitude for social networking influence a Transition Specialists' abilities in their work?

1. I will email the staff at my school to inquire about opportunities to create on-campus experiential learning opportunities.
2. I will ask staff at my school in person about creating on-campus experiential learning opportunities.
3. I am comfortable using social networking to create experiential learning opportunities for students.
4. I have created a network of connections within various departments at my school to assist with finding and creating experiential learning opportunities for students.
5. I can utilize my social networking skills to create off campus experiential learning opportunities for students.
6. I am comfortable activating my social network to create off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.
7. I will email non-school personnel to ask about creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.
8. I will approach non-school personnel in person to ask about creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students
9. I will utilize the social networks of parents and families to identify and contact off-campus businesses and non-profits to identify experiential learning opportunities for students.

Part 2 of the questionnaire focuses on the educational and employment histories of respondents. It is broken down into three sub sections and questions align with research sub questions A and B. It was with purpose that the demographic questions were asked at the end of the questionnaire. This was done to offset any fatigue a respondent may feel by allowing for the easiest, most personal questions to be the conclusion of the survey (Nardi, 2003).

The first section in Part 2, entitled *Section One: Special Education Employment & Credentials* features 11 questions. These questions are multiple choice and/or open response and focus on the respondent's employment history and educational licensing through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014). The second section, entitled *Section Two: Former Career & Education*¸ features five multiple choice and open response questions that ask for information on highest degree attained, where respondent's attended college and asks if the respondent had a prior career to becoming a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist. The third and final section, entitled *Personal Demographics,* features three questions – the age, gender and race of the respondents.

Validity and Reliability Measures of the Instrument

It was crucial to ensure that my study is considered both a valid and reliable measure of the educational and professional backgrounds as well as the intrinsic professional qualities of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Muijis, 2011). To do this, I employed a multi-tiered approach to check both the validity and reliability of my questionnaire prior to conducting this study (Yan, 2014). I also considered the potential threats to the validity of my study.

First, I checked the content validity of my instrument. Content Validity refers to the connection between the statements found in my questionnaire and the theories or concepts I employed in my research (Muijs, 2011). Between February 11, 2017 and March 12, 2017 my questionnaire was examined by 22 people. This group was comprised of friends, family,

and experts in Special Education and the field of Vocational Rehabilitation and was broken down into three sub-groups. Each was tasked with examining different elements of my questionnaire. The first group examined it for professional competencies related to the work of Transition Specialists (CEC, 2013). The second group looked at readability, and the third group rated the belief statements on their connection to each theory being employed in my study (Yan, 2014).

The first group, comprised of 4 professional colleagues, was tasked with examining my questionnaire for content. Through this process it was found that all 39 of the belief statements presented in Part 1 of my questionnaire directly correlated to the duties outlined for a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist (CEC, 2013).

The second group, which comprised of 8 non-professionals, examined the survey for spelling errors, readability, and time it took to complete. This ensured my questionnaire was clear, readable and that the layout and design was accessible to those who were unfamiliar with my topic (Yan, 2014). Through this process it was found that though there were no spelling errors, the survey did have some small grammatical errors. On average, the group reported it took 14 minutes to complete.

The third and final group, which consisted of 10 of ten professionals who worked within the realm of transition planning and/or vocational rehabilitation (Tilson and Simonsen, 2013) acted as a pilot group to review my survey for both validity and reliability during the week of March 6, 2017. Upon completion of this review, I utilized SPSS to calculate the

reliability of my questionnaire (Muijs, 2011). This ensured that the belief statements are interrelated to the theoretical underpinnings I applied to my questionnaire.

Further, I considered the potential threats to the validity of my study, both internally and externally (Creswell, 2009). A threat to the internal validity of a study is described as "experimental procedures, treatments, or experiences of the participants that threaten the researcher's ability to draw correct inferences from the data about the population in an experiment" (Creswell, 2009, p. 162). These threats can be found in the participant pool, the way the study is being handled by the researcher (i.e. interactions with participants that cause them harm or feelings of devaluation, people decide not to participate), and potential issues with the instrument (Creswell, 2009). While a potential threat to external validity can "arise when experimenters draw incorrect inferences from the sample data to other persons, other settings, and past or future situations" (Creswell, 2009, p. 162).

In considering the nature of my quantitative study, the only potential internal validity issue was the potential that people would drop out of my study. This was especially important to consider as the timing of this research coincided with the end of the 2016-2017 school year. This was mitigated however, by the fact that my sample size was large enough that in the event participants did not complete the study, it was likely enough people would still respond to ensure my sample size was large enough for analysis. I also kept my online survey link active through July 2017 to allow for respondents to complete it once school the school year was ended. The timeline of my study will be discussed further later in the chapter.

My study encompassed 463 public secondary schools, Special Education Collaboratives and Chapter 766 approved Special Education Schools in Massachusetts (DESE, 2016). I considered that though my study sample is large in the sense that I sought responses from secondary Special Education Transition Specialists across Massachusetts, it is also small in the sense that I am solely looking for those working in this capacity only in this state. This does limit the number of respondents within the field. I believe that my study results can be generalized but should be interpreted with caution. In the discussion of my findings in Chapter 5, I further outline the limitations that the setting and context of my study could present.

Data Collection

As stated previously in this chapter, a self-administered questionnaire was designed and employed to collect data from targeted secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. To collect data, a two-step process was employed. First, information was collected from schools to ensure the proper person within the school setting was sent the questionnaire. Second, once the correct person was identified I sent them the questionnaire via USPS postal mail or via a Qualtrics link. Upon receipt of the completed questionnaire, I sent the respondent a $5.00 gift card to Dunkin Donuts along with a hand-written personalized card as a thank you for their participation in my study. The gift card was only sent if the respondent completed the optional form included at the end of the questionnaire.

I received approval on my Dissertation Proposal from my committee on January 24, 2017. I began the first step of data collection on February 1, 2017 and finished it on April 1, 2017. Because this information is accessible to the public on the Massachusetts DESE website, I did not need IRB Approval to construct the database. I constructed a database of potential schools to contact by utilizing the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website (2016). This database was created in Microsoft Excel and was housed on a private computer only accessible by me.

This database included 11 columns including the school name, address, phone number, the name of a Special Education Director, an email for the department or appropriate contact if no director was indicated, the name of the Transition Specialist if listed, their email address and a place to indicate when the survey was mailed or emailed to the respondent. The data base also included a column to identify if the school was a public secondary school, Special Education Collaborative or Chapter 766 Approved School.

As part of this process 9 of the 478 originally included schools were deleted from the database, bringing the total down to 469 potential school settings across the Commonwealth. Four of the public secondary schools were eliminated, three because they did not have the correct programming on-site and one because it was my current employer. Five of the Chapter 766 Special Education schools were deleted due to the age or grades of the population served not being appropriate for this research thereby they would not have a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist on staff.

Upon receiving my IRB Approval on April 14, 2017, I began step two of my data collection process. Each school or district's Special Education Director or Administrator received an email from me (APPENDIX D) which provided a brief introduction of my project and what person I was looking to contact within their district or school setting. Upon receiving responses, I updated my database with the name of the correct person to contact in each public secondary school, Special Education Collaborative and Chapter 766 Approved Special Education school. At that time, I also sent a copy of my questionnaire (APPENDIX A), Cover Letter (APPENDIX B) and Informed Consent Form (APPENDIX C) to the correct person.

Throughout step two of data collection school settings were eliminated from my study. Eight schools were removed as they either confirmed that they did not have a Transition Specialist on staff or did not want to participate. Leaving 461 potential school settings across the Commonwealth to contact. Further, it was discovered that some towns and cities listed in the MA DESE Online Database (2016) shared one secondary Special Education Transition Specialist across the district, eliminating schools individually as one person could complete the questionnaire for several schools. Due to this, 58 public secondary schools were eliminated from the database, leaving 403 potential respondent school settings. Because questionnaires were only sent to public secondary schools, Special Education collaboratives and Chapter 766 schools who responded to my initial email, 169 questionnaires were sent out.

The first 100 surveys were sent out via USPS first class mail and included a self-addressed stamped envelope so respondents could mail back my questionnaire free of charge. Initially, my data collection plan was to send the questionnaires all hard copy, but during the data collection process I revised my plan and created an online version of my questionnaire using Qualtrics. This was done because response rates can be lower when surveys are solely mailed and often only twenty to thirty percent are returned (Nardi, 2003). Further, I was concerned that I would not get enough responses to have a large enough data pool for analysis (Creswell, 2009).

Step two of data collection began on April 17, 2017. All initial emails were sent out to the entire database by June 11, 2017. As previously stated, once I received a response from my initial inquiry email, I sent out the questionnaire that day. Between June 12, 2017 and July 16, 2017 follow up emails were sent to those identified with a link to the online version of the questionnaire. Data collection ended on July 16, 2017.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the data collection phase of my study, I used SPSS, a data analysis software program to code and analyze the collected data. Specifically, I used SPSS because of its' functionality. I also used it because I was able to purchase the program and download it to a secure password protected computer to ensure the data collected was protected and kept confidential.

All collected data was inputted into SPSS. Respondents were identified by a numeric code, no names or school districts were referenced in the labeling of the respondents (Creswell, 2009). Once the data entry process was completed, I examined the respondents using frequency distribution strategies in the Descriptive Statistics function in SPSS (Muijs, 2011). Specifically, I looked at the respondent group by age, race, gender, educational backgrounds and employment histories.

In addition, I utilized statistical tests to examine the correlation between the respondents' demographics and their educational and employment histories. Further I was able to analyze the interrelationship between their entrepreneurial leadership skills, self-efficacy beliefs, and the social networking skills (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, t-tests and one-way ANOVA procedures were used.

Researcher Role

As previously stated in chapter one, my positionality as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist was a large part of my desire to conduct this study. As I have been in this role for 13 years, it was crucial to my research that I considered this as I moved through the data collection and analysis process.

I also considered that during the data collection phase of my study that the rate of response could have been influenced by my positionality, which is why I chose a quantitative methodology over a qualitative or mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2009). Limitations due to my positionality and role in this research are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

My statewide comparative quantitative study was designed to examine those employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. Specifically, my study explored their educational backgrounds and employment histories as well as examined their entrepreneurial leadership skills, self-efficacy beliefs, and social networking savvy. The study was designed to provide a large overview of what drives people, like myself, to work in this crucial but niche role within the field of secondary Special Education.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

As stated in chapter one, much research has been conducted on the necessary competencies and job-related duties of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists (DCDT, 2000; Kohler, 1996; Benitez, Morningstar & Fray, 2009; Morningstar, Nations-Miller, MacDonald, & Clavenna-Deane, 2009; CEC, 2013). Despite the existing knowledge of the expectations placed on secondary Special Education Transition Specialists, little is known about the backgrounds and intrinsic personal qualities of the educational practitioners who take on this unique role.

The purpose of this study, which was inspired by the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013), was to examine and reveal the educational and employment backgrounds as well as the intrinsic personal qualities of those working as Transition Specialists across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As outlined in chapter three, this study was conducted in the spring and early summer of 2017. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in three distinct settings; secondary public schools, Special Education Collaboratives, and Chapter 766 Approved Special Education schools.

In this chapter I will discuss the results of my research. Specifically, I will describe the data, review trends and patterns and reveal connections between my research questions and the results of the study.

Research Questions

This study was directed by one primary research question and supported by four sub-questions. These questions are directly linked to the educational and professional backgrounds as well as the intrinsic personal qualities of those doing the work of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Overarching Research Question

> What are the professional and educational backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists and how do their entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived level of self-efficacy, and aptitude for social networking of impact their ability to complete the duties required of this position?

Sub-Questions

a) What are the professional and educational backgrounds of Transition Specialists?
b) To what level do Transition Specialists act as entrepreneurial leaders in their work?
c) How do Transition Specialists perceive their level of self-efficacy in their work?
d) To what extent does their aptitude for social networking influence a Transition Specialists' abilities in their work?

Data Analysis Procedure

As discussed in Chapter 3, IBM SPSS Version 25 Software was used to analyze data collected through my questionnaire. This software was downloaded and utilized on a password protected computer. Results from each questionnaire returned to me were coded and data was inputted into IBM SPSS. No identifying information including respondent name or school/district name was included in the database.

First, I used descriptive measures to look more closely at the respondents, specifically what types of schools they work in, their basic demographic information and current professional status and title. Next, I examined their educational and professional backgrounds. Third, I utilized t-test and one-way ANOVA functions in SPSS to look at the correlation between the three theoretical tenets of my study; entrepreneurial leadership skills, beliefs related to self-efficacy, and social networking skills.

Demographic Data Analysis

School District Demographics. As discussed in chapter three, 169 questionnaires were sent via USPS first class mail and/or online survey link between April 17, 2017 and July 10, 2017. These were sent to specific staff members identified as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists and/or those working in this capacity under a different professional title in public secondary school settings, Special Education Collaboratives and Chapter 766 Special Education schools (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).

The link to the Qualtrics online survey was left open to respondents through July 16, 2017. Of those sent, 105 were completed, yielding a 62% return rate. Responses were coded

and all data was entered in IBM SPSS Version 25. Table 3 represents the breakdown of responses by school type.

Table 3

Summary of School Programs, Sent and Return Rate

School Program	First Email Sent	Questionnaire Sent	Questionnaire Returned	Response Percent (%)
Public School	281	117	70	59.8
Collaborative	25	15	13	86
Chapter 766	97	37	21	56.7
Missing	0	0	1	0
Total	403	169	105	62

It is important to note that this response rate is particularly high. This could be considered a limitation of my study as my positionality as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist within my field of study may have influenced the number of respondents (Creswell, 2009). This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Respondent Demographics. The 105 respondents included those working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and people whose job duties included those of a Transition Specialist, even if they do not have that professional title. Table 4 outlines the demographic information of the entire respondent group. It is broken down by age, gender and ethnicity.

Table 4

Summary of Descriptive Statistics by Age, Gender, and Ethnicity

Demographic Variable	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Age		
25 – 39	39	37.1
40 – 49	30	28.6
50 – 59	22	21
60 or older	13	12.4
Missing	1	0.9
Total	105	100.00
Gender		
Male	13	12.4
Female	89	84.8
Missing	3	2.9
Total	105	100.00
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	104	99
African American	0	0
Asian American	0	0
Hispanic	0	0
Other	0	0
Missing	1	1
Total	105	100.00

At present, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) does not specifically track the demographic information of people working in the Commonwealth as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists. However, the data collected does align with the broad staffing statistics posted by the Massachusetts DESE on their website (2018). Indicating that of the 134,258 full time staff members employed in Massachusetts schools, more than half of them are under 50 years old and identify as female

and White/Caucasian. These statistics correlate to the data I collected from the respondents in my study.

Professional Information and Backgrounds

Professional Titles. As mentioned in chapter one, it is important to note that despite legislation in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts allows for a person to be endorsed as a Transition Specialist (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014) school districts and secondary school programs are not required to have a Transition Specialist on staff (Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009). Further, holding the endorsement is not required to do the work of a Transition Specialist.

Due to this, respondents were not all employed as solely secondary Special Education Transition Specialists. In some cases, respondents indicated that they had a different professional title, but complete some or all the duties of a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist in their work.

Of the 105 total respondents, 41 of them reported that they are currently employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists within their public secondary school, Special Education Collaborative, or Chapter 766 Approved Special Education School setting. The remaining 64 respondents identified another professional title and wrote it in on the questionnaire. This is outlined in Table 5.

Table 5

Distribution of Professional Titles

Professional Title	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Transition Specialist	41	39
Special Education Administrator	11	9.5
Special Education Teacher	20	19
Other	32	30
Missing	1	0.0
Total	105	100

The category of Other, featured 32 write in responses where the respondents indicated their specific professional title. Table 6 outlines these results.

Table 6

Professional Titles – Other

Professional Title	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Vocational Coordinator	2	6.25
Vocational Counselor	1	3.1
Vocational Director	1	3.1
Vocational Specialist	1	3.1
Job Developer/Transition Specialist	1	3.1
Special Education Team Facilitator	1	3.1
Special Education Team Chairperson	9	28.5
Transition Specialist/Special Education Teacher	6	18.75
Coordinator of Sub-Separate 18-22 Programs	1	3.1
Special Education Director	1	3.1
Special Education Unit Leader	1	3.1
Work Study Coordinator	1	3.1
Program Coordinator/Special Education Teacher	1	3.1
Guidance Counselor	1	3.1
Director of Guidance and Transition	1	3.1
Assistant Principal	1	3.1
Transition Specialist/Adjustment Counselor	1	3.1
Curriculum and Instruction Specialist	1	3.1
Total	32	100

In considering the professional titles of the entire respondent group and those who wrote in a specific professional title, 79% of the group holds a position with a title that indicates a leadership position. This is indicated by the specific titles that include "administrator, chairperson, coordinator, director, facilitator, leader, specialist, and principal." Further, 57% of respondents have a professional title that include the transition and/or coordinator/specialist/director in it.

Transition Specialist Endorsement. As previously noted in this chapter as well as in chapter one, to do the work of a secondary Transition Specialist, it is not required that a person hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement (Youth on the Move, 2012). However, 57% of respondents indicated that they are employed specifically as a secondary Transition Specialist as signified by their professional title. Table 7 indicates if respondents hold the Transition Specialist Endorsement through the MA DESE.

Table 7

Current Transition Specialist Endorsement Status

Transition Specialist Endorsement	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Hold Endorsement	22	21
Do Not Hold Endorsement	81	77.1
Missing	2	1.9
Total	105	100.00

Of the total respondent group, 21% are currently endorsed through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a Transition Specialist. Respondents who do not hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement were further asked if they intended to pursue one. Those results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Plan to Pursue Transition Specialist Endorsement

Plan to Pursue Transition Specialist Endorsement	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Pursuing/Plan to Pursue	26	32.1
Do Not Plan to Pursue	55	67.9
Total	81	100.0

The respondents who are not currently endorsed as Transition Specialists in Special Education made up 77.1% of the total group. Of those people, only 32.1% are pursuing or planning to pursue a Transition Specialist Endorsement. Considering that of the total respondent group, 57% are employed in roles where they are considered either as a Transition Specialist or completing the duties of a Transition Specialist, Table 9 outlines the breakdown of the total respondent group by those who currently hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement, those who are pursuing or potentially pursuing the endorsement and those who are not intending to become endorsed.

Table 9

Total Number of Endorsed and Potentially Endorsed

Endorsement Status	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Hold Transition Specialist Endorsement	22	21.0
Pursuing/Planning to Pursue Endorsement	26	24.8
Not Pursuing Endorsement	57	54.2
Total	105	100.00

Only 21% of the total respondent group is currently endorsed as a Transition Specialist through the MA DESE. While 24.8% of respondents are in process of pursuing, or plan to pursue the Transition Specialist Endorsement in the future. Further, 54.2% of those

who currently act in this capacity have no plans to pursue the Transition Specialist Endorsement. Yet, 57% of the respondent group also holds a professional title which indicates they are referred to as a Transition Specialist. Indicating that there is a discrepancy between those who are endorsed or plan to become endorsed as secondary Transition Specialists and those who are working under an ideation of this title. Implications from this discrepancy are discussed further in chapter 5.

Licensing. To work within the field of Special Education in Massachusetts, specifically as a Transition Specialist, a person must be licensed. As stated in chapter one, to be a Transition Specialist in secondary Special Education is eligible for the endorsement provided they hold a valid license as a Special Educator, a certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Commonwealth, or other select positions (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013). Table 10 provides information on which license those working as secondary Transition Specialists in Special Education indicated that they currently hold.

Table 10

Type of License Held

License Type	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Special Educator	75	71.5
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	6	5.7
Holds Neither License	23	21.9
Missing	1	0.09
Total	105	100.00

Of the respondents, 71.5% identified that they are licensed in Special Education, while only 5.7% of those working as secondary Transition Specialists are licensed as

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Making a total of 77.2% licensed while 21.9% of respondents indicated that they do not hold either license.

The 71.5% of respondents who identified that they are licensed in Special Education were asked to further indicate their specific licensing in Special Education as well write in their current licensing if it did not fit into pre-specified categories. Table 11 provides the breakdown of the Special Education Licenses held by the respondents by license type, grade level and type of licensure.

Table 11

Special Education Licensing

Type of License	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Special Education: Moderate Disabilities	52	66.7
Special Education: Severe Disabilities	18	17.1
Special Education: Other	8	10.3
Total	78	100.00

Grade Level of Licensure	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Pre-K to 8	4	5.3
Grades 5 – 12	36	48.0
Grade Level All	31	41.3
Grade Level – Other	4	5.3
Total	75	100.00

Type of Licensure	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Temporary Licensure	0	0.00
Preliminary Licensure	1	1.3
Initial Licensure	19	24.1
Professional Licensure	59	74.7
Total	79	100.00

Per the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an educator who works in Special Education is licensed by disability type and grade level as

well as hold licensure at four different levels based on professional experience and development (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Website, 2019). In looking at the respondent data, 66.7% of Special Educators who responded are licensed in Moderate Disabilities. Further, 48% are licensed to work with students in Grades 5-12 and 41% are licensed to work with all Grade levels. Additionally, 74% are professionally licensed in Special Education, indicating that they have worked in Special Education for over five years (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019).

Respondents were also given the opportunity to write in any additional licenses and certifications they hold. Table 12 outlines the additional educational, administrative, and specialist licenses, endorsements, and certifications held by the respondents, many of which hold multiple licenses.

Table 12

Additional Licenses and Endorsements Held

License or Endorsement Type	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent	1	1.0
Special Education Administrator	21	22.9
Administrator: Other (not specified)	2	2.0
Principal: 5-12	1	1.0
Principal/Assistant Principal: 9-12	3	3.3
Principal/Assistant Principal: PK-6	3	3.3
Principal/Assistant Principal (not specified)	1	1.0
School Adjustment Counselor	7	7.7
School Psychologist	1	1.0
Licensed Mental Health Counselor	3	3.3
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	3	3.3
Guidance Counselor: PK-12	1	1.0
Occupational Therapist	2	2.0

Speech Language Pathologist	1	1.0
Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)	2	2.0
Reading Specialist	1	1.0
Autism Endorsement	4	4.4
SEI Endorsement	2	2.0
Special Education: Pre-K -8	1	1.0
Business Education	1	1.0
Elementary Education: K-8	6	6.5
English Language Arts: 5-8	3	3.3
English Language Arts: 9-12	7	7.6
English as a Second Language: 5-12	2	2.0
History: 5-8	4	4.4
History: 9-12	2	2.0
Humanities: 5-8	1	1.0
Mathematics: 9-12	1	1.0
Physical Education	1	1.0
Visual Arts: 1-8	2	2.0
Intensive Special Education	1	1.0
Pupil Personnel Services (North Carolina)	1	1.0
Guidance Counselor: K-12 (NY)	1	1.0
Guidance Counselor :5-12 (NH)	1	1.0
Total	92	100.0

It is important to note that not all respondents only work as Transition Specialists, at times, others within the district or school setting are charged with completing the tasks related to this work (Li, Bassett, and Hutchinson, 2009). Further, as previously mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, the state of Massachusetts does not require a person working as a Transition Specialist to be endorsed as one. This explains the diversity in the professional titles, the variety of licenses and endorsements the group holds overall, and Transition Specialist endorsement status of the respondents that has been evident in the findings thus far.

Years in Role. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, the position of secondary Transition Specialist in Special Education has been discussed in Special Education research for over 30 years (DeFur &Taymans, 1995; Kohler & Field, 2003; Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009;

Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geiger & Morningstar, 2009, Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, Teo & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2018). However, it wasn't until 2012 in Massachusetts that an endorsement was created through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Youth on the Move, 2012).

Considering this, respondents were asked to indicate how many years they have been employed at their current setting under their professional title and how many years they have worked in the field of Special Education in total. Table 13 outlines the number of years that respondents have worked in their current setting as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists or a role that completes the work of one.

Table 13

Years Employed at Current Setting in Current Position

Years in current setting and position	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
0-3 years	42	40.0
4-10 years	49	46.7
11-20 years	11	10.5
21-30 years	2	1.9
Missing	1	1.0
Total	105	100.00

As previously stated, legislation that provided for endorsement for secondary Transition Specialists in Massachusetts was enacted seven years ago in 2012. Table 13 shows that 86.7% of respondents have been employed in their current setting, working under their current professional title, for 0 – 10 years. Further, 46.7% of that group has been in their current position for 4-10 years. This indicates that the settings that the respondents work in have had a person working in this capacity for all or nearly all of the time since the

Transition Specialist Endorsement became available to Special Educators and Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists. Table 14 looks at the number of years each type of setting has had a person employed as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist.

Table 14

Total Years of Transition Specialists in Specific School Settings

	Public Secondary Schools	
	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
0-3 years	31	44.3
4-10 years	32	45.8
11-20 years	6	8.5
21-30 years	1	1.4
Total	70	100.00
	Chapter 766 Approved Schools	
	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
0-3 years	8	38.1
4-10 years	8	38.1
11-20 years	4	19
21-30 years	1	4.8
Total	21	100.00
	Special Education Collaboratives	
	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
0-3 years	3	23.1
4-10 years	9	69.2
11-20 years	1	7.7
21-30 years	0	0
Total	13	100.00
Missing	1	1
Total	105	99

The data presented in Table 14 indicates 90.1% of Public Secondary Schools have had a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist employed in their setting for 10

years or less. Similarly, the same is true for Chapter 766 Approved Schools and Special Education Collaboratives, who reported 76.2% and 92.3% of settings also had one for 10 years or less as well. The data also shows a large increase in the employment of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in the past decade, which aligns with timing of when the enactment of Transition Specialist endorsement Legislation took place (Youth on the Move, 2012).

Endorsed Transition Specialists Across Settings. Table 14 shows a clear increase in the number of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in all three settings just before and after Transition Specialist Endorsement was made available in 2012 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013). But it's important to note there is a discrepancy between the number of people doing this work and their endorsement status.

As previously stated, 77.2% of respondents are licensed in either Special Education or Vocational Rehabilitation. However, only 21.4% of respondents reported being endorsed as a Transition Specialist through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Table 15 provides a breakdown of the three settings examined in my study and where the 21.4% are employed.

Table 15

Endorsed Transition Specialists in Specific School Settings

		Hold Endorsement		
		Yes	No	Total
Public Secondary School	Count	18	52	70
	% with Endorsement	25.7	74.3	100.00
Chapter 766 Approved School	Count	1	20	21
	% with Endorsement	4.8	95.2	100.00
Special Education Collaborative	Count	3	9	12
	% with Endorsement	25	75	100.00
Total	Count	22	81	103
	% with Endorsement	21.4	78.6	100.00

In Public Secondary Schools, 25.7% of those employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists are endorsed by the Massachusetts DESE as a Transition Specialist. This is similar to the responses of those working in Special Education Collaboratives who reported 21.4% of them are endorsed. In Chapter 766 Approved Schools only 4.8% of Transition Specialists are endorsed.

In addition to the 21.4% who currently are endorsed, there were 32.1% of respondents who reported that they are either currently pursuing or planning to pursue the Transition Specialist Endorsements through the Massachusetts DESE at an approved Transition Leadership Program offered through a college or university in Massachusetts. Table 16 displays where the 32.1%, who are potentially going to be endorsed as Transition Specialists, are working.

Table 16

Potentially Endorsed Transition Specialists in Specific School Settings

		Hold Endorsement		
		Yes	No	Total
Public Secondary School	Count	17	35	52
	% Pursuing Endorsement	32.7	67.3	100.00
Chapter 766 Approved School	Count	4	15	19
	% Pursuing Endorsement	21.1	78.9	100.00
Special Education Collaborative	Count	5	5	10
	% Pursuing Endorsement	50	50	100.00
Total	Count	26	55	81
	% Pursuing Endorsement	32.1	67.9	100.00

In Public Secondary Schools, 32.7% of those who are not yet endorsed as Transition Specialists are either currently enrolled in programs to earn this endorsement or plan to be in the future. In Special Education Collaboratives and Chapter 766 Schools, 50% and 21.1% respectively also intend to become endorsed as Transition Specialists. Overall, however, 67.9% of those who are not endorsed as Transition Specialists have no plans to become endorsed.

Previous Careers. As stated in chapter 1, I changed careers into Special Education. I believe that my employment history greatly influences my ability to complete the tasks and duties of my position as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist. To that end, as part of my questionnaire, respondents were asked to share if they had a different career or profession prior to working in the field of Special Education. Table 17 shows the results.

Table 17

Previous Career/Profession Before Becoming a Special Educator

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Had a different career or profession	43	41
Did not have a different career or profession	60	57.1
Missing	2	1.9
Total	105	100.00

A total of 41% of those working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts report changing careers into Special Education. Respondents were able to specify what their previous career or profession was via a write in option on the questionnaire. 100% of those who reported having a different career or profession provided their previous career information. Table 18 breaks down the previous careers and professions reported and aligns them with the 16 career clusters outlined by the United States Department of Labor's Pathways to College and Career Readiness (National Career Clusters Framework, 2019).

Table 18

Previous Career and Profession Distribution

Career Cluster		Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Agriculture	Landscaper	1	2.4
Arts & Communications	News Reporter	1	2.4
	Fine Artist (Murals)	1	2.4
Business Management	Program Administrator	1	2.4
	Chief Information Officer	1	2.4
	Real Estate Agent	1	2.4
Education & Training	College Sports Coach	1	2.4
	Non-Profit Education Program Manager	1	2.4
	Higher Education Staff Member	2	4.7

	Staff Trainer	1	2.4
	English Teacher	1	2.4
	General Education Teacher	4	9.4
	Early Childhood Educator	2	4.7
	After School Program Coordinator	1	2.4
Finance	Financial Bookkeeper	1	2.4
	Financial Investment Broker	1	2.4
	Accountant	1	2.4
Health Sciences	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	4	9.4
	Mental Health Counselor	2	4.7
	Residential Home Manager	3	7.1
	Occupational Therapist	1	2.4
	Behavior Specialist	1	2.4
	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	1	2.4
	Nutrition Coordinator	1	2.4
Hospitality	Restaurant Manager	1	2.4
	Hospitality Director	1	2.4
	Food Services	1	2.4
Human Services	Human Service Staff	1	2.4
	Cosmetologist	1	2.4
Information Technology	Information Technology Specialist	1	2.4
Law & Public Safety	Special Education Lawyer	1	2.4
	Total	43	100.00

Table 19

Examination of Career Cluster Distribution

Career Cluster	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Agriculture	1	2.3
Architecture & Construction	0	0.0
Arts & Communications	2	4.7
Business Management	3	7.0
Education & Training	13	30.2
Finance	3	7.0
Government & Public Administration	0	0.0
Health Sciences	13	30.2
Hospitality	3	7.0
Human Services	2	4.7
Information Technology	1	2.3
Law & Public Safety	1	2.3

Manufacturing	1	2.3
Marketing	0	0.0
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	0	0.0
Transportation & Logistics	0	0.0
Total	43	100.00

When examined, 30.2% of respondents who did change careers into Special Education came from Education and Training careers and 30.2% came from Health Science careers. Indicating that 60.4% of the total group who changed careers came from adjacent jobs and positions to Special Education. People who are drawn to these types of careers enjoy working with and helping people through teaching and/or providing health related care and services (Career One Stop, 2019).

Educational Backgrounds

To gain a greater understanding of the backgrounds of secondary Transition Specialists, the educational histories of respondents was also considered. Respondents were asked to provide information on their educational credentials including the highest degree earned and what colleges and/or universities they attended.

Degrees Earned. Table 20 outlines the highest degrees earned by the respondents.

Table 20

Highest Degree Attained

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Bachelor's Degree	9	8.6
Master's Degree	64	61.0
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS)	14	13.3
Doctoral Degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.)	8	7.6
Other	9	8.6
Missing	1	1.0
Total	105	100.00

A total of 61% of respondents hold Master's Degrees, while 20.9% report having an advanced degree including a Ed.D., Ph.D., or a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies. Additionally, 8.6% of respondents reported having a degree of "other" on the questionnaire. Respondents were given the opportunity to write in a response. Those answers are presented in Table 21.

Table 21

Other – Write-in Degrees Earned

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)	1	11.1
Additional Credits past Master's Degree	2	22.2
Juris Doctor	1	11.1
Additional Master's Degree	1	11.1
Missing	4	44.5
Total	9	100.00

Of those who wrote in additional degrees earned, 22.2% report that they have earned additional credits past their Master's Degree, 11.1% has a certification in Behavior Analysis,

11.1% has earned a Juris Doctor and 11.1% has earned an additional Master's Degree. In total, 90.3% of respondents hold a Master's Level Degree or higher.

Colleges and Universities. Respondents were also asked to provide information about the colleges and universities they attended by writing in this information. Specifically, the respondents were asked to indicate which state within the United States the college or university they attended was located in as well as what their major area of study was. It is important to note that not all respondents completed this open response question. The results reported represent the data that was provided.

Colleges and universities were broken down categorically by whether they are listed as a public or private setting by the National Center for Education Statistics (College Statistics, 2019). Table 22 breaks down where the undergraduate colleges and universities attended by the respondents were located.

Table 22

Location of Colleges and Universities - Undergraduate

		Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Total Percent (%)
Massachusetts	Public	35	63.6	
	Private	20	36.4	
	Total	55	100.00	62.5
California	Public	1	50.0	
	Private	1	50.0	
	Total	2	100.00	2.4
Connecticut	Public	2	100.00	
	Private	0	0.00	
	Total	2	100.00	2.4
Florida	Public	1	100.00	
	Private	0	0.00	
	Total	1	100.00	1.2
Maine	Public	1	100.00	

	Private	0	0.00	
	Total	1	100.00	1.2
Maryland	Public	1	100.00	
	Private	0	0.00	
	Total	1	100.00	1.2
Michigan	Public	1	100.00	
	Private	0	0.00	
	Total	1	100.00	1.2
New Hampshire	Public	3	37.5	
	Private	5	62.5	
	Total	8	100.00	9.4
New York	Public	4	80.0	
	Private	1	20.0	
	Total	5	100.00	5.8
Ohio	Public	3	60.0	
	Private	2	40.0	
	Tota1	5	100.00	5.8
Pennsylvania	Public	2	100.00	
	Private	0	0.00	
	Total	2	100.00	2.4
Rhode Island	Public	2	66.7	
	Private	1	33.3	
	Total	3	100.00	3.5
Total	Public	56	63.6	
	Private	32	36.3	
	Total	88	100.00	100.00

Proportionally, 24% of the 50 states in the United States of America are represented in the data. In total 63.6% of respondents who provided their undergraduate college and university information went to a public college or university for their undergraduate education. Further, 40% of those people went to a public college or university in Massachusetts. Overall, 62.5% of those who responded went to school for their undergraduate education in Massachusetts. This indicates that a majority of the secondary Transition Specialists employed in Massachusetts attended their undergraduate studies

locally. Table 23 provides information about the location of the colleges and universities that respondents went to for their Master's Degree programs.

Table 23

Location of Colleges and Universities - Graduate

		Frequency (N)	Percent by State (%)	Total Percent (%)
Massachusetts	Public	35	43.2	76.1
	Private	46	56.8	83.6
	Total	81	100.00	84.3
Arizona	Public	1	100.00	2.2
	Private	0	0.00	0.00
	Total	1	100.00	1.0
California	Public	3	100.00	6.5
	Private	0	0.00	0.00
	Total	3	100.00	3.1
New Hampshire	Public	1	100.00	2.2
	Private	0	0.00	0.00
	Total	1	100.00	1.0
New Jersey	Public	1	100.00	2.2
	Private	0	0.00	0.00
	Total	1	100.00	1.0
New York	Public	1	33.0	2.2
	Private	2	67.0	3.6
	Total	3	100.00	3.1
Ohio	Public	0	0.00	0.00
	Private	1	100.00	1.8
	Total	1	100.00	1.0
Online Program	Public	0	0.00	0.00
	Private	4	100.00	7.2
	Total	4	100.00	4.2
Rhode Island	Public	4	66.6	8.7
	Private	2	33.4	3.6
	Total	6	100.00	6.3
Total	Public	46		47.9
	Private	55		52.1
	Total	96		100.00

In total, 47.9% of respondents attended a public college or university for their Master's Level Degree programs. With 76.1% of those respondents attending a school in Massachusetts. This again indicates that a majority of those working in secondary Special Education as a Transition Specialist were educated in Massachusetts. Table 24 shows the location of the colleges and universities attended by respondents who have earned an advanced degree. Advanced Degrees include doctoral studies, certificates of advanced graduate studies, and juris doctoral degrees.

Table 24

Location of Colleges and Universities – Advanced Degrees

		Frequency (N)	Percent by State (%)	Total Percent (%)
Massachusetts	Public	8	61.5	100.00
	Private	5	38.5	33.3
	Total	13	100.00	56.5
Maryland	Public	0	0.00	0.00
	Private	1	100.00	6.6
	Total	1	100.00	4.3
Online Program	Public	0	0.00	0.00
	Private	8	100.00	53.3
	Total	8	100.00	34.8
Rhode Island	Public	0	0.00	0.00
	Private	1	100.00	6.6
	Total	1	100.00	4.3
Total	Public	8		34.8
	Private	15		65.2
	Total	23		100.00

In relation to advanced degrees, 100% of respondents indicated that they received their degree from a public college or university in Massachusetts. However, this is only 34.8% of the total group. 65.2% of the total respondent group reported that they earned more

of their advanced degrees in private settings. As this study is designed to examine the backgrounds and personal qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts, Table 25 provides a comparison of those who attended college or university in Massachusetts.

Table 25

Comparison of Public, Private Degrees in Massachusetts

		Frequency (N)	Percent by Degree Type (%)	Total Percent (%)
Undergraduate	Public	35	63.6	44.9
	Private	20	36.4	28.2
	Total	55	100.00	37
		Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Total Percent (%)
Graduate	Public	35	43.2	44.9
	Private	46	56.8	64.8
	Total	81	100.00	54.3
		Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Total Percent (%)
Advanced	Public	8	61.5	10.2
	Private	5	38.5	7
	Total	13	100.00	8.7
		Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Total Percent (%)
Total	Public	78		52.3
	Private	71		47.7
	Total	149		100.00

Based on the data provided by the respondents, most of the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists employed in Massachusetts were educated in Massachusetts. Further, when you look at the total respondent group, it appears that it is near evenly split between public and private colleges and universities at 52.3% and 47.7% respectively. However, when examined by degree type it demonstrates that more secondary Transition

Specialists reported attending public undergraduate and advanced study programs than graduate programs.

Only 43.2% of those who shared their graduate program location reported attending a public college or university in Massachusetts. While 63.6% of those who reported on their undergraduate program location attended a public college or university in Massachusetts. Similarly, 61.5% of those who shared the location of their advanced degree program attended a public college or university in Massachusetts.

Further analysis was conducted on the major areas of study in respondents' undergraduate programs and graduate studies work. As part of the questionnaire, respondents were given the option to write-in this information. It is important to note that not all respondents participated and not all respondents provided areas of study. Table 26 outlines the undergraduate areas of study as reported.

Table 26

Undergraduate Majors Reported by Respondents

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Special Education	9	9.6
Education	11	11.9
Elementary Education	8	8.6
Outdoor Education	1	1.1
Secondary Education	1	1.1
American Studies	1	1.1
Behavioral Analysis and Science	2	2.1
Business Management	2	2.1
Communication Disorders	3	3.1
Communications	2	2.1
Creative Writing	1	1.1
Criminal Justice	2	2.1
English	7	7.6

Human Development	1	1.1
Music	1	1.1
Neuroscience	1	1.1
Occupational Therapy	1	1.1
Painting/Fine Art	1	1.1
Political Science	3	3.2
Psychology	22	23.8
Speech and Language Pathology	1	1.1
Sociology	3	3.2
World History	9	9.6
Total	92	100.00

Of those who reported their undergraduate major area of study, 23.8% were Psychology majors. Further, within the respondent group, there were five sub-groups who studied a form of Education. Specifically, Special Education, Education, Elementary Education, Outdoor Education, and Secondary Education were listed. Table 27 focuses on solely those who studied a form of Education.

Table 27

Education Undergraduate Majors

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Special Education	9	30
Education	11	36.6
Elementary Education	8	26.6
Outdoor Education	1	3.4
Secondary Education	1	3.4
Total	30	100.00

By breaking out the data specific to Education Majors, it is evident that 32.6% of the total respondent group outlined in Table 26 studied a form of education. This indicates that

Education is the most studied undergraduate major, Psychology is the second highest at 23.8%.

A similar process was used to analyze the data provided regarding graduate programs of study indicated by the respondents. Table 28 outlines their responses.

Table 28

Graduate Majors Reported by Respondents

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Moderate/Severe Special Education	41	49.4
Education	8	9.7
Rehabilitation Counseling	6	7.2
Education Administration	4	4.8
Education Leadership	3	3.6
Assistive Technology	1	1.2
Behavioral Analysis and Science	2	2.4
Criminal Justice	1	1.2
Curriculum and Instruction	2	2.4
English	1	1.2
Occupational Therapy	1	1.2
Psychology	2	2.4
School Counseling	8	9.7
Speech Language Pathology	1	1.2
Social Work	2	2.4
Total	83	100.00

Of the total respondents, 49.4% reported earning a graduate degree in Moderate/Severe Special Education and are working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists. Further, 9.7% studied Education, 9.7% studied School Counseling, and 7.2% studied Rehabilitation Counseling. In total, 76% of the respondents studied Special Education, Education, and Counseling.

This is important because in the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013) which was the motivation for this study, they were looking at those working in Rehabilitation Counseling. These results imply that there is a correlation between the fields as suggested in their piece as 7.2% of the respondents reporting graduate degree programs studied Rehabilitation Counseling. Though this isn't the highest percentage area, it suggests that there is some crossover between the fields. It also supports the fact that a secondary Transition Specialist Endorsement can be earned by Special Educators and Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013).

Comparative Data Analysis of Professional Qualities

In addition to examining the educational and employment backgrounds of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts, Descriptive Statistical Analysis, T-Tests and ANOVA's were run to examine the Entrepreneurial Leadership qualities, perceived Self-Efficacy, and aptitude for Social Networking indicated by the respondents. As outlined in chapter 3, the questionnaire featured belief statements which users rated using a Likert Scale. These statements directly correlated to the theoretical framework discussed in chapter 2.

Enacting Qualities of Entrepreneurial Leadership. To examine the how secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts act as Entrepreneurial Leaders in their work, a variety of statistical analysis procedures were employed. These included descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA procedures. A variety of descriptive statistical analyses were conducted.

In coding this data for data analysis, 1 was labeled as missing data. Numerals 2 through 5 were coded in SPSS Version 25 to correlate with the following values in the Likert Scale used in the Questionnaire; 2 = "not at all", 3 = "Very Little", 4 = "To Some Extent", and 5 = "To a Great Extent." This is important to note as it is will impact how the tables provided should be interpreted. Further, composite variable groups were created based on the data collected. These groups are *School Setting, Soft Skills,* and *Innovate.* The next three tables present the data which correlates to these composite variables.

Table 29

Descriptive Statistics for Entrepreneurial Leadership Skills (School Settings)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Improve Existing Programs in School	104	4.78	5.00	.44	3	5
Grow New Programs in School	104	4.72	5.00	.56	2	5

When considering responses demonstrated in Table 29 above, it is evident that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists feel strongly that they are able to enact these skills in their school settings. They reported that overall, they feel that to "a great extent" they are able to improve existing transitionally based programs and take initiative to grow new transitionally based programs within their schools. However, it is important to note that there is some latitude in the minimum and maximum ratings, so there was some variety in the answers, despite the overall high rating in the ability to act as an entrepreneurial leader in relation to this composite variable.

In addition to creating and growing opportunities, there are a variety of personal skill areas that Entrepreneurial Leaders enact in their work (Leonard, 2013). Composite variable

Soft Skills specifically looks at the soft skills needed to be an entrepreneurial leader. Results are presented in Table 30 below.

Table 30

Descriptive Statistics for Entrepreneurial Leadership Skills (Soft Skills)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Turn problems into opportunities	103	4.50	5.00	.54	3	5
I work independently	104	4.57	5.00	.60	3	5
I am easily discouraged	104	2.98	3.00	.80	2	5
Turn failures into new opportunities	103	4.30	4.00	.59	2	5
Don't take "no" for an answer	104	4.85	5.00	.38	3	5
Adjust my work as needed	104	4.11	4.00	.66	2	5
Take various perspectives into account	104	4.88	5.00	.33	4	5
Follow school and district rules	104	4.85	5.00	.36	4	5
Think critically and creatively	104	4.76	5.00	.42	4	5
Focus on steps to reach desired outcome	104	4.82	5.00	.41	3	5

The results of the composite variable *Soft Skills* indicate that secondary Transition Specialists in Massachusetts believe that they are acting as Entrepreneurial Leaders in their work. In each of the skills outlined in this variable group the respondents reported that they are enacting these skills to a high level and are not easily discouraged and are able to turn failures into opportunities. Further, they report they do not take "no" for an answer.

Entrepreneurial Leaders are also known for their innovative nature (Leonard, 2013). Table 31 demonstrates the results of the composite variable *Innovative*. This correlates to the belief that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists are striving to create new and innovative ways to provide their students with transitionally appropriate educational experiences. Results outlined indicate that the respondent group believes that they are doing this entrepreneurial work "to a great extent" (M respondents = 4.78).

Table 31

Descriptive Statistics for Entrepreneurial Leadership Skills (Innovate)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Create and innovate experiences	103	4.78	5.00	.48	3	5

To further examine how secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts believe they are entrepreneurial leaders in their work, data analysis using t-test procedures in SPSS Version 25 were run. Specifically, tests for significance were run to examine the levels in which Transition Specialist's with and without Transition Specialist Endorsements act as entrepreneurial leaders in relation to the specific facets of their work outlined in the composite variable groups that were used previously. These are *School Setting, Soft Skills,* and *Innovate.*

In each of these variable t-tests results, an alpha level, $\alpha = 0.05$, was used to determine if there was a specific difference in the entrepreneurial leadership skills of those who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement and those who do not. If the p-value was found to be greater than the alpha level, then it is believed that both groups, those endorsed and those who are not, enact equal levels of entrepreneurial leadership skills in relation to the composite variable group assessed. However, if the p-value is less than the alpha level, then the opposite is true and there is a difference in the entrepreneurial leadership skills beliefs held by those with and without Transition Specialist Endorsements. In addition to the p-value, a measure of central tendency and variability were also calculated for each variable.

Table 32

T-Test for Entrepreneurial Leadership Skills, Endorsement (School Settings)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed			95% CI for Mean			
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	Difference		t	df
Improve Existing Programs in School	4.86	.46	22	4.75	.43	81	-.10	.32	1.04	101
Grow New Programs in School	4.86	.46	22	4.68	.58	81	-.08	.45	1.35	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 32 displays the results of the t-test procedure that was run to examine the observed level of significance between secondary Transition Specialists who hold the Transition Specialist Endorsement and those who do not. In both of the categories of the composite variable *School Setting* there was no significance found. Both of the p-values for each of the variables in this composite group were larger than the alpha value, $\alpha = 0.05$. For the variable *Improve Existing Programs*, $p = .30$ and for the variable *Grow New Programs* in School, $p = .17$. Therefore, it is confirmed that there is no difference between those who are endorsed as a Transition Specialist and those who are not in relation to their entrepreneurial leadership skills in this composite variable.

Table 33 below outlines the results of the t-test procedure that was run to examine the entrepreneurial leadership skills of the composite variable *Soft Skills.* Specifically, it compared those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists in Massachusetts and those who are not. In the ten variables in this composite group there was no significance found. Each p-value calculated was larger than the alpha value, $\alpha = 0.05$. However, in two of the

variables, *Turning Failures into Opportunities* and *Following School and District Rules,* the p-values were calculated at p = .06 and p = .08 respectively. This could indicate that though there is not a statistical difference, entrepreneurial leadership skills in these two variables within the composite group *Soft Skills* are potentially an area where those who are endorsed versus those who are not have different levels of entrepreneurial leadership skills.

Table 33

T-Test for Entrepreneurial Leadership Skills, Endorsement (Soft Skills)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
							95% CI for Mean			
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	Difference		t	df
Turn problems into opportunities	4.59	.50	22	4.48	.55	80	-.14	.37	.89	100
Work independently	4.55	.51	22	4.57	.63	81	-.31	.26	-.15	101
Easily discouraged	2.95	.89	22	3.00	.77	81	-.42	.33	-.23	101
Turn failures into new opportunities	4.50	.51	22	4.24	.60	80	-.01	.54	1.87	100
Don't take "no" for an answer	4.23	.52	22	4.07	.70	81	-.16	.47	.95	101
Adjust work as needed	4.86	.35	22	4.84	.40	81	-.16	.21	.25	101
Take various perspectives into account	4.86	.35	22	4.88	.33	81	-.17	.14	-.16	101
Follow school and district rules	4.73	.45	22	4.88	.33	81	-.32	.02	-1.73	101
Think critically and creatively	4.68	.47	22	4.78	.41	81	-.30	.11	-.92	101
Focus on steps to reach desired outcome	4.91	.29	22	4.79	.43	81	-.07	.31	1.19	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

In Table 34 the results of the t-test procedure that was run to examine the observed level of significance between secondary Transition Specialists who hold the Transition

Specialist Endorsement and those who do not in relation to the composite variable *Innovate* is presented.

Table 34

T-Test for Entrepreneurial Leadership Skills, Endorsement (Innovate)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Create and innovate experiences	4.86	.46	22	4.75	.49	80	-.11	.34	.97	100

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Based on the data presented in Table 34, there is no difference in the ability to create and innovate transitionally appropriate experiences for students between those who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement and those who do not. All who complete this task as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists feel that they complete this task as part of their job duties with high levels of success whether they are endorsed or not (M endorsed = 4.86 vs. M not endorsed = 4.75). The p value of this variable, $p = 0.33$, is greater than the alpha, $\alpha = 0.05$, which further confirms this.

Perceived Self-Efficacy. As previously noted in relation to entrepreneurial leadership skills, a variety of statistical analysis procedures were employed to analyze the perceived self-efficacy levels of respondents as well. These included descriptive statistics, t-tests and ANOVA procedures. First, a variety of descriptive statistical analyses were conducted. In coding this data for analysis, 1 was labeled as missing data. Numerals 2 through 5 were coded in SPSS Version 25 to correlate with the following values in the Likert Scale used in

the Questionnaire; 2 = “not at all”, 3 = “Very Little”, 4 = “To Some Extent”, and 5 = “To a Great Extent.” This is important to note as it is will impact how the tables provided should be interpreted.

Overall beliefs held by the respondents that they could effectively execute all of the duties outlined in their job description as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist were analyzed. This is presented in Table 35.

Table 35

Belief in Ability to Complete Job Duties

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Very Little	6	5.7	5.8
To Some Extent	22	21.0	21.3
To A Great Extent	75	71.4	72.9
Missing	2	1.9	
Total	105	100.00	100.00

Of the valid responses, 72.9% belief that they can effectively execute their job duties “to a great extent.” When this is further analyzed, it is found that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists have strong belief in their abilities to complete the duties associated with this position. The mean score demonstrates that more people reported higher levels of belief in their abilities. This is outlined in Table 36.

Table 36

Descriptive Statistics for Overall Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Overall Self-Efficacy Belief	103	4.67	5.00	.58	3	5

Further analysis focused on the perceived self-efficacy beliefs of Transition Specialists was conducted using this same descriptive statistical measurement procedure. A composite variable for *Job Related Duties* was created. Responses are outlined in Table 37.

Table 37

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy (Job Related Duties)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Knowledge of Chapter 688 Process	105	4.69	5.00	.52	3	5
Follow up on Chapter 688 Referral	105	4.61	5.00	.61	2	5
Explain Job Duties to Special Educators	105	4.90	5.00	.29	4	5
Explain Job Duties to General Educators	105	4.85	5.00	.38	3	5

Transition Specialists reported overall strong beliefs in their ability to complete their job-related duties. The standard deviation indicates that in relation to the Chapter 688 Referral Process, Transition Specialists perceived self-efficacy is consistent. The respondents believe they have the skills to follow through with this process. In relation to explaining their job duties to both Special and General Educators, however, the standard deviation indicates that though they rated themselves as a whole fairly highly, there was some discrepancy in the consistency of the answers. This is also supported by the minimum and maximum scores for the variables. Overall however, Transition Specialists demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy in relation to completion of their job-related duties.

A composite variable was created from the data focused on *Partnerships.* Responses are outlined in Table 38.

Table 38

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy (Partnerships)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Develop experiential learning opportunities	105	4.41	5.00	.74	2	5
Explain purpose to local business leaders	105	4.5	5.00	.70	2	5
Explain purpose to non-profit businesses	105	4.53	5.00	.66	2	5

Transition Specialists reported strong belief in their ability to create partnerships with both non-profit organizations and local businesses on behalf of students. The consistency in the standard deviation between the variables indicates that the perceived self-efficacy of Transition Specialists is relation to creating partnerships is consistent. Further, the Mean score for all the variables considered in this composite category is also consistent. Overall Transition Specialists demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy in relation to their belief in their ability to creating partnerships for experiential learning opportunities for students.

A composite group, *Disability Category*, was created to examine the perceived self-efficacy of Transition Specialists in relation to creating pre-vocational partnerships with local businesses for students with varying levels of need. The disability categories outlined are aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's disability categories used in Special Education (MA DESE, 2013). Table 39 outlines this.

Table 39

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy (Disability Category)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders	105	4.35	5.00	.82	2	5
Students with Developmental Delays	105	4.27	5.00	.94	2	5
Students with Intellectual Impairments	104	4.27	4.00	.92	2	5
Students with Sensory Impairments	104	3.79	4.00	1.03	2	5
Students with Neurological Impairments	104	4.10	4.00	.90	2	5
Students with Emotional Impairments	102	4.22	4.00	.81	2	5
Students with Communication Impairments	104	4.16	4.00	.90	2	5
Students with Physical Impairments	104	4.04	4.00	.96	2	5
Students with Health Impairments	103	4.15	4.00	.92	2	5
Students with Specific Learning Disabilities	102	4.43	5.00	.77	2	5

Transition Specialists ratings of their perceived self-efficacy skills in this composite were varied, but still overall felt that they had some ability develop partnerships with local businesses to create pre-vocational opportunities for a variety of students. It's important to note that the respondent number fluctuated as not all respondents answered this question. Second, the lowest rated Mean score, at 3.79, was related to students with Sensory Impairments. This is supported by the fluctuation in the standard deviation noted in this variable as well. Transition Specialists reported that they had the strongest belief in their skills around creating pre-vocational opportunities for students on the Autism Spectrum, and who were diagnosed with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. The lowest area of self-efficacy beliefs is in the area of students with Sensory Impairments.

To examine the perceived self-efficacy of Transition Specialists in relation to the process of transition planning, a composite variable entitled *TPF* was created. This

composite group specifically aligns with the sections outlined as part of the Transition Planning Form (TPF) that accompanies an IEP and outlines the plans for reaching a student's post-secondary vision. The areas are specific to education, employment and community living and recreation. The results are displayed in Table 40.

Table 40

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy (TPF)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Post-Secondary Education Options	105	4.66	5.00	.49	3	5
Post-Secondary Employment Options	105	4.53	5.00	.53	3	5
Post-Secondary Community Living Options	105	4.22	5.00	.63	3	5

The responses from secondary Special Education Transition Specialists indicate that there is a high level of perceived self-efficacy in relation to their ability to clearly explain the options available for education and community living with students and families. However, there is a slight drop in their confidence when it comes to discussing community living options. This is evident in the discrepancy in the Mean scores outlined in Table 40.

Further, the standard deviation for the Post-Secondary Community Options variable is slightly elevated from the standard deviations listed for the other two variables. Transition Specialists report the most perceived self-efficacy their ability to discuss post-secondary employment options, followed by post-secondary employment options, with post-secondary community living options being their least efficacious area.

In addition to discussing the post-secondary options available to students after graduation, Transition Specialists also need to be response to the individual needs of their

students and their families. Considering this, a composite variable entitled *Diversity* was created. This variable specifically looked at a Transition Specialists perceived self-efficacy around explaining the post-secondary transition planning process to students and families based on three distinct areas; an individual's disability related needs, socio-economic status, and post-secondary vision. The results are outlined in Table 41.

Table 41

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy (Diversity)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Disability Related Needs	105	4.78	5.00	.41	4	5
Socio-Economic Status	105	4.41	4.00	.61	3	5
Post-Secondary Vision	105	4.85	5.00	.36	4	5

Transition Specialists reported high levels of self-efficacy in relation to explaining the post-secondary transition planning process to students based on their disability related needs and post-secondary vision. This is evident by the similarity in the Mean scores and standard deviations. In relation to having the same discussion, Transition Specialists report a slightly lower sense of self-efficacy when they are explaining this process and need to consider a student's socio-economic status. There is a higher standard deviation in this variable as well as more variability in answers. With the Median rated at a 4.00, this indicates respondents only feel as though they have these skills closer "to some extent" rather than to "a great extent."

A composite variable group was created to look at the perceived self-efficacy of Transition Specialists in relation to acting as the liaison between the school, students, and

Massachusetts state agencies that support transition planning. This variable group is called *Agencies.* The results are in Table 42.

Table 42

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy (Agencies)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)	105	4.62	5.00	.62	2	5
Department of Developmental Services (DDS)	105	4.39	5.00	.79	2	5
Department of Mental Health (DMH)	104	3.95	4.00	.86	2	5
Commission for the Blind (MCB)	104	3.75	4.00	.95	2	5
Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)	105	3.74	4.00	.99	2	5
Department of Children and Families (DCF)	105	4.22	4.00	.86	2	5

Based on the results of these variables, Transition Specialists have varying levels of self-efficacy based on which agency they are engaging with. The Commission for the Blind (MCB) and Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) had the lowest Mean averages and highest standard deviation. Indicating that Transition Specialists believe they only have moderate skills to engage with these two agencies. Similarly, the Department of Mental Health, also appears to be a Massachusetts state agency that Transition Specialists don't feel as confident about. Overall, the highest level of self-efficacy in relation to agency communication was found with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

To further examine the perceived self-efficacy of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts, data analysis using t-test procedures in SPSS were run. Specifically, tests for significance were run to look at the perceived level of self-efficacy of Transition Specialists who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement through the

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and those who are not endorsed. The composite variables used to run these t-tests are the same groups used with the descriptive analyses that were run previously.

In each of these variable t-tests results, an alpha level, a = 0.05, was used to determine if there was a specific difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of endorsed versus not endorsed respondents who are employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists. If the p-value was found to be greater than the alpha level, then it is believed that those who are endorsed and not endorsed have equal levels of self-efficacy in relation to the composite variable group assessed. However, if the p-value is less than the alpha level, then the opposite is true and there is a difference in the self-efficacy beliefs held by those endorsed and those who are not. In addition to the p-value, a measure of central tendency and variability were also calculated for each variable. The composite variable groups used in these t-test procedures were *Job Duties, Partnerships, Disability Category, TPF, Diversity, and Agencies.*

Table 43

T-Test for Self-Efficacy, Endorsement (Job Duties)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Knowledge of Chapter 688 Process	4.77	.42	22	4.65	.55	81	-.13	.37	.93	101
File and Follow Chapter 688 Referral	4.59	.50	22	4.60	.64	81	-.30	.28	-.09	101
Explain Special Education Staff	4.95	.21	22	4.89	.31	81	-.07	.20	.91	101
Explain General Education Staff	4.86	.35	22	4.84	.40	81	-.16	.21	.25	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 43 shows the results of a t-test procedure that examined the perceived level of self-efficacy of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists based on their Transition Specialist Endorsement status with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2014). Based on the results, both those with and without an endorsement feel that they have strong levels of self-efficacy surrounding the knowledge they need to complete and explain their role within Special Education.

Table 44 below details the results for the composite variable *Partnerships* which looked at the ability to create partnerships with businesses and non-profit groups in relation to endorsement status.

Table 44

T-Test for Self-Efficacy, Endorsement (Partnerships)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Develop experiential learning opportunities	4.68	.47	22	4.33	.78	81	-.00	.70	1.96*	101
Explain purpose to local business leaders	4.73	.45	22	4.43	.75	81	-.04	.63	1.74	101
Explain purpose to non-profit businesses	4.77	.42	22	4.47	.70	81	-.01	.61	1.91*	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

This composite variable was focused on the ability of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists to create partnerships on behalf of students. Based on the results, the descriptive data shows that there is a significant difference in two of the subcategories in this composite variable. First, in relation to developing experiential learning opportunities those with an endorsement have stronger beliefs in their skills, $t(101) = 1.96$, $p = 0.05$, than those who are not endorsed. Second, in explaining their purpose in creating experiential learning opportunities to non-profit organization management, those with an endorsement have stronger beliefs in their skills, $t(101) = 1.91$, $p = 0.05$, than those who do not.

Table 45 below outlines the results of the t-test procedure for the composite variable *Disability Category* in relation to Transition Specialist endorsement status. The results outlined below indicate that there is a significant difference in three of the ten disability categories that are outlined in the composite variable: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Developmental Delays, and Emotional Disabilities. In the remaining seven variables there

was no significant difference between those who hold an endorsement as a Transition Specialist and those who do not. None of the p-values associated with those variables were greater than alpha, $\alpha = 0.05$

First, in the variable, Autism Spectrum Disorders, respondents who are endorsed as a Transition Specialist have greater perceived self-efficacy when working with this population, $t(101) = 2.55$, $p = 0.01$, than those who are not endorsed. Second, in the variable Developmental Delays, respondents who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement report stronger having stronger perceived self-efficacy skills when working with students with developmental delays, $t(101) = 1.91$, $p = 0.05$, than those who are not currently endorsed. Third, in the variable Emotional Impairments, respondents who are endorsed as Transition Specialists reported having stronger perceived self-efficacy skills in relation to working with students with emotional disabilities, $t(98) = 1.98$, $p = 0.05$, than those who are not endorsed.

Table 45

T-Test for Self-Efficacy, Endorsement (Disability Category)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Autism Spectrum Disorders	4.73	.45	22	4.23	.87	81	.11	.87	2.55*	101
Developmental Delays	4.59	.73	22	4.16	.98	81	-.01	.87	1.91*	101
Intellectual Impairments	4.50	.98	22	4.19	.94	80	-.13	.75	1.40	100
Sensory Impairments	4.05	.65	22	3.69	1.09	80	-.12	.84	1.45	100
Neurological Impairments	4.27	.82	22	4.03	.92	80	-.18	.68	1.13	100
Emotional Impairments	4.50	.59	22	4.12	.85	78	-.00	.77	1.98*	98

Communication Impairments	4.41	.66	22	4.08	.95	80	-.09	.76	1.54	100
Physical Impairments	4.27	.75	22	3.95	1.00	80	-.13	.78	1.39	100
Health Impairments	4.41	.66	22	4.05	.98	79	-.08	.79	1.62	99
Specific Learning Disabilities	4.64	.58	22	4.36	.82	78	-.09	.58	1.48	98

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

A t-test procedure was run to calculate the perceived self-efficacy of endorsed versus not endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialist's ability to explain the post-secondary transition planning process to students and families in relation to education, employment, and community living options. These variables were grouped into the composite variable *TPF*. The results are presented in Table 46.

Table 46

T-Test for Self-Efficacy, Endorsement (TPF Knowledge)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Post-Secondary Education Options	4.73	.45	22	4.65	.50	81	-.16	.30	.61	101
Post-Secondary Employment Options	4.59	.50	22	4.53	.55	81	-.19	.31	.46	101
Post-Secondary Community Living Options	4.36	.65	22	4.19	.63	81	-.12	.48	1.16	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Based on the results of the t-test procedure, there is no significant differences in the self-efficacy beliefs of endorsed versus non-endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in relation to the composite variable *TPF*. Specifically, for each

variable included in this group, the p-value calculated was consistently higher than the alpha value, indicating that both endorsed and non-endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists feel they enact the same level of self-efficacy in their positions when they are explaining post-secondary education, employment, and community living options to students and their families.

It is important to note that though there is no difference in the level of self-efficacy between endorsed and not endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists, there is a difference in the level of self-efficacy the entire respondent group feels in regard to discussing the three sub variables with students and families. The entire respondent group indicated that they felt most efficacious when speaking to students and families about post-secondary education options (M endorsed = 4.73 and M not endorsed = 4.65). They further indicated that employment options (M endorsed = 4.59 and M not endorsed = 4.53) and community living options (M endorsed = 4.36 and M not endorsed = 4.19) are areas where they feel less efficacious, respectively.

Table 47 displays the results of the t-test procedure that was run using composite variable *Diversity.* This composite variable looks at the perceived self-efficacy of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in relation to their ability to clearly explain the post-secondary transition planning process to students and families based on three variables; the student's disability related needs, socioeconomic status, and post-secondary vision statement. The results of this t-test are presented in the table below.

Table 47

T-Test for Self-Efficacy, Endorsement (Diversity)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Disability Related Needs	4.77	.42	22	4.79	.41	81	-.21	.18	-.17	101
Socioeconomic Status	4.41	.66	22	4.41	.60	81	-.29	.29	.01	101
Post-Secondary Vision	4.86	.35	22	4.85	.35	81	-.15	.18	.13	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

For the variable of disability related needs, the p-value, $t(101) = -0.17$, $p = .86$, is greater than the $\alpha = 0.05$. Similarly, for the other two variables, the p-values are also greater than $\alpha = 0.05$ as well. For socioeconomic status, $t(101) = 0.01$, $p = 0.99$ and for post-secondary vision, $t(101) = 0.13$, $p = 0.89$. This indicates that for all three variables in the composite variable category *Diversity* there is no difference in the perceived self-efficacy of those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists and those who are not endorsed.

T-Test procedures were run for the composite variable *Agencies.* This variable contained six variable sub groups aligned with the six state agencies that Transition Specialists work with; the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Results of the t-test procedures are displayed in Table 48.

Table 48

T-Test for Self-Efficacy, Endorsement (Agencies)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
MRC	4.82	.39	22	4.57	.67	81	-.04	.54	1.67	101
DDS	4.64	.58	22	4.32	.83	81	-.06	.69	1.66	101
DMH	4.14	.77	22	3.90	.88	80	-.17	.64	1.14	100
MCB	3.95	.72	22	3.68	1.01	80	-.18	.73	1.20	100
MCDHH	3.91	.75	22	3.68	1.04	81	-.24	.70	.96	101
DCF	4.18	.79	22	4.22	.89	81	-.45	.37	-.19	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Based on the results of the t-test procedure, secondary Special Education Transition Specialists report the highest level of self-efficacy when they are interacting with staff from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) (M endorsed = 4.82 and M not endorsed = 4.57). The lowest level of self-efficacy was reported when working with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) (M endorsed = 3.95 and M not endorsed = 3.68) and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) (M endorsed = 3.91 and M not endorsed = 3.68).

Further, based on the p-values calculated for each of the six variables, there is no significant difference between the perceived self-efficacy of endorsed versus not endorsed secondary Transition Specialists when interacting with staff from state agencies as part of the transition planning process. . Each of the p-values calculated was greater than the alpha value, $\alpha = 0.05$. The p-value for MRC was $t(101) = 1.67$, $p = 0.09$, DDS was $t(101) = 1.66$, p

= 0.09, DMH was t(100) = 1.14, p = 0.25, MCB was t(100) = 1.20, p = 0.23, MCDHH was t(101) = 0.96, p = .33, and DCF was t(101) = -0.19, p = .84.

***Aptitude for Social Networking*.** Similarly, to the process used to analyze both entrepreneurial leadership skills, and perceived self-efficacy; a variety of statistical analysis procedures were employed to analyze the aptitude for social networking of respondents as well. These included descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA procedures. First, a variety of descriptive statistical analyses were conducted. In coding this data for analysis, 1 was labeled as missing data. Numerals 2 through 5 were coded in SPSS Version 25 to correlate with the following values in the Likert Scale used in the Questionnaire; 2 = "not at all", 3 = "Very Little", 4 = "To Some Extent", and 5 = "To a Great Extent." This is important to note as it impacts how the tables provided should be interpreted. Further, three composite variable groups were created to examine the aptitude for social networking that was displayed by the respondents, these were *In School, Off-Campus,* and *Families.*

Table 49 below displays the results data for the variables included in this composite. The variables included specific tasks that are part of the duties of a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist that specifically involve utilizing social networking skills to create and implement on-campus experiential learning opportunities by communicating with staff in various departments and roles throughout the school. The types of opportunities that a secondary Transition Specialist might be trying to create on-campus include pre-vocational jobs/internships, activity of daily living skills practice like cooking, cleaning, navigation, etc. (CEC, 2013).

Table 49

Descriptive Statistics for Social Networking (In School)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Email staff to discuss on-campus learning	103	4.32	5.00	.93	2	5
Ask staff to discuss on-campus learning in person	103	4.40	5.00	.91	2	5
Created network in school setting	104	4.14	4.00	.93	2	5

The descriptive statistical data shown in Table 49 revealed that all respondents indicate that they possess a high level of social networking skill when it comes to emailing, speaking, and creating networks with school staff in regard to the creation of on-campus experiential learning opportunities for their students. This is evidenced by the Mean scores for each variable in the composite group. The lowest mean score, M = 4.14, was in relation to creating a network within the school, where the other two variables relating to emailing staff and speaking to staff in person yielded Mean scores, M = 4.32 and M = 4.40 respectively. Indicating that all respondents rated their ability to do these social networking tasks as "to a great extent."

The descriptive data provided in Table 50 looks at social networking skills in relation to creating off-campus opportunities experiential learning opportunities for students. The composite variable group, *Off-Campus,* was utilized for this descriptive analysis.

Table 50

Descriptive Statistics for Social Networking (Off-Campus)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Utilize social networking skills off-campus	103	3.77	4.00	1.01	2	5
Comfortable activating social networks	102	3.76	4.00	1.09	2	5
Email non-school personnel	104	4.21	4.00	.93	2	5
Approach non-school personnel in person	104	4.25	4.50	.89	2	5

The descriptive data outlined in Table 50 demonstrates that secondary Special education Transition Specialists report less ability to create social networks off-campus than they do on campus. Specifically, this can be seen in the Mean scores of the first two variables in the composite. The mean for utilizing social networking skills to create off-campus experiential opportunities, M = 3.77 indicates that respondents reported only feeling that they could do this "to some extent." Similarly, the Mean score for the comfort with activating social networking to create off-campus experiential opportunities, M = 3.76 indicates that respondents reported only feeling that they could do this "to some extent." Further the range of scores shown in the Min and Max range indicates that there was a broad range of scores across all variables within the composite variable *Off-Campus.* Tables 51 and 52 examine the results of the first and second variables, *Utilize social networking skills off-campus* and *Comfortable activating social networks* more closely.

Table 51

Ability to Utilize Social Networking Skills for Off-Campus Opportunities

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Not At All	19	18.1	18.4
Very Little	17	16.2	16.5
To Some Extent	36	34.3	35.0
To A Great Extent	31	29.5	30.1
Missing	2	1.9	
Total	105	100.00	100.00

In examining the responses more closely, only 30.1% of respondents indicated that they felt they have the ability to utilize their social networking skills to create off-campus experiential opportunities for students. Where 35% reported they could do this "to some extent," and 34.9% of respondents stated they felt they could do this "very little" or "not at all." Indicating overall that utilizing social networking skills off campus is not an area that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists feel confident in overall.

Table 52

Comfort Activating Social Networks for Off-Campus Opportunities

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Not At All	20	19	19.6
Very Little	15	14.3	14.7
To Some Extent	36	34.3	35.3
To A Great Extent	31	29.5	30.4
Missing	3	2.9	
Total	105	100.00	100.00

The results demonstrated in Table 52 above show that only 30.4% of respondents reported feeling that they were fully comfortable activating their social networks to create off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students. While 35.3% of respondents felt

that they could do this “to some extent” and 34.3% of respondents felt they could not do this at all or could only do this “very little.” This demonstrates that overall secondary Special Education Transition Specialists are not confident in activating their social networks to create off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.

Table 53 below utilized the composite variable *Families.* Specifically, this variable looked at the ability to use social networking skills with parents and families in regard to setting up off-campus experiential learning opportunities.

Table 53

Descriptive Statistics for Social Networking (Families)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Approach parents and families to ask for help	104	4.05	4.00	.90	2	5
Use the social networks of parents and families	102	3.75	4.00	1.01	2	5

The descriptive data presented in Table 53, demonstrates that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists do not feel fully comfortable approaching parents and families and utilizing their social networks to create off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students. This is further explored in Tables 54 and 55 below.

Table 54

Approach Parents and Families for Assistance

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Not At All	6	5.7	5.8
Very Little	22	21.0	21.2
To Some Extent	37	35.2	35.6
To A Great Extent	39	37.1	37.5
Missing	1	1.0	
Total	105	100.00	100.00

Based on the descriptive data presented in Table 54, 37.5% of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported that they feel confident in their ability to approach parents and families to ask for help in creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities. While 35.6% indicated they only feel they could do this "to some extent" and 27% reported they could do this "very little" or "not at all."

Table 55

Utilize Social Networks of Parents and Families

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Not At All	15	14.3	14.7
Very Little	23	21.9	22.5
To Some Extent	37	35.2	36.3
To A Great Extent	27	25.7	26.5
Missing	3	2.9	
Total	105	100.00	100.00

Further, the data presented in Table 55, shows that only 26.5% of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists utilize the social networks of parents and families to a great extent when creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students. Further, 36.3% of the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists who responded that they would do this to "some extent," while 37.2% of them said the do this "very little" or not at all. Indicating that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists are less confident in using their social networking skills when approaching and talking to parents and families about creating experiential learning opportunities than they are with school staff and local business leaders. Implications from this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

To further examine the social networking skills of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts, data analysis using t-test procedures in SPSS Version 25 were run. Specifically, tests for significance were run to look at the social networking skills of Transition Specialists who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and those who are not endorsed. The composite variables used to run these t-tests are the same groups used with the descriptive analyses that were run previously.

In each of these variable t-tests results, an alpha level, a = 0.05, was used to determine if there was a specific difference in the social networking skills of endorsed versus not endorsed respondents who are employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. If the p-value was found to be greater than the alpha level, then it is believed that those who are endorsed and not endorsed have equal levels of self-efficacy in relation to the composite variable group assessed. However, if the p-value is less than the alpha level, then the opposite is true and there is a difference in the social networking skills of those endorsed and those who are not. In addition to the p-value, a measure of central tendency and variability were also calculated for each variable. The composite variable groups used in these t-test procedures were *In-School, Off-Campus,* and *Families.*

Table 56 below outlines the results of a t-test procedure that examined the composite variable *In School.* This variable specifically looked at the social networking skills enacted by secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in a school setting. The variables in this composite group center on emailing and speaking to staff to create on-campus

experiential learning opportunities as well as creating networks of connections within the school to assist with the creation of these opportunities.

Table 56

T-Test for Social Networking Skills, Endorsement (In School)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Email staff to discuss on-campus learning	4.62	.59	21	4.24	.99	80	-.07	.83	1.67	99
Ask staff to discuss on-campus learning in person	4.71	.46	21	4.31	.98	80	-.04	.84	1.80	99
Created network in school setting	4.32	.94	22	4.09	1.04	80	-.24	.70	.93	100

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results outlined in Table 56 show that there is no significant difference in the social networking skills of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in relation to the composite variable *In-School.* The p-values for each of the variables within this composite are not greater than alpha, $\alpha = 0.05$. However, when you consider the endorsement status of the respondents in relation to the Mean scores on the first two variables, *Email staff to discuss on-campus learning* (M endorsed = 4.62 versus M not endorsed = 4.24) and *Ask staff to discuss on-campus learning in person* (M endorsed =4.71 versus M not endorsed = 4.31) it is evident that those who hold endorsements feel they are able to use their social networking skills to "a greater extent" than those who are not.

Table 57 displays the results of a t-test procedure run for the composite variable *Off-Campus.* This composite variable specifically looked at the aptitude to use social networking skills in the community at large to create off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students by enacting networks involving local business and non-profit leaders. This analysis compared secondary Special Education Transition Specialists who are endorsed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and those who are not. Results are outlined in the table below.

Table 57

T-Test for Social Networking Skills, Endorsement (Off-Campus)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
							95% CI for Mean			
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	Difference		t	df
Utilize social networking skills off-campus	4.27	.82	22	3.63	1.10	80	.14	1.15	2.55**	100
Comfortable activating social networks	4.09	.86	22	3.68	1.13	80	-.10	.93	1.59	100
Email non-school personnel	4.64	.49	22	4.09	.99	81	.11	.85	2.51**	101
Approach non-school personnel in person	4.50	.59	22	4.17	.94	81	-.09	.74	1.53	101

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Results from the t-test procedure run for the composite variable *Off-Campus* reveal a statistically significant difference between the social networking skills of endorsed and not endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in two of the four variables examined within the composite. They are *Utilize social networking skills off-campus,* t(100)

= 2.55, p = 0.01, and *Email non-school personnel,* t(101) = 2.51, p = 0.01. In both of these variables the p-value of is less than alpha, $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected and in fact, there is a difference between endorsed and non-endorsed Transition Specialist's social networking skills in relation to utilizing social networking skills to create off campus experiential learning opportunities and in emailing non-school personnel to inquire about creating these opportunities.

In the other two variables housed in this composite, high levels of standard deviation, .99 and .94 respectively, indicate some broad variability in respondent answers to these statements. Further demonstrated in Table 57, the Mean scores of the non-endorsed respondents are consistently lower than those who are endorsed. Indicating that overall, endorsed Transition Specialists feel that they are greater able to utilize their social networking skills in relation to creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.

A final t-test procedure was run for the composite variable *Families.* This variable examined the social networking skills used by secondary Special Education Transition Specialists to ask parents and families of their students for assistance and access to their social networks when creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities in local businesses and non-profit organizations. Table 58 below displays these results.

Table 58

T-Test for Social Networking Skills, Endorsement (Families)

	Endorsed			Not Endorsed						
Variable	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
Approach parents and families to ask for help	4.32	.78	22	3.96	.92	81	-.07	.78	1.64	101
Use the social networks of parents and families	4.05	.89	22	3.66	1.03	80	-.09	.83	1.58	100

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the t-test procedure run for the composite variable *Families* does not reveal a significant difference in the social networking skills of those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists and those who are not. This was indicated by the p-values calculated for each. For the variable *Approach parents and families to ask for help,* $t(101) = 1.64$, $p = 0.10$, and for the variable *Use the social networks of parents and families,* $t(100) = 1.58$, $p = 0.11$.

In both cases however, the Mean scores tell a different story. Mean scores are higher with those who are endorsed versus those who are not in both variables housed within this composite. This difference indicates that while both groups will use social networking skills to work with parents and families when creating off-campus experiential learning experiences for their students, those who are endorsed will do this “to a greater extent” than those who are not.

School Setting Effects. Multiple final data analysis procedures were run to examine the intersectionality of entrepreneurial leadership skills, levels of perceived self-efficacy and aptitude for social networking skills in relation to school settings and years in current position. Specifically, ANOVA procedures were run to examine the data in relation to these descriptive variables.

A one-way ANOVA procedure was used to determine if there is a significant difference between the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists working in each of the settings included in this study; Public Secondary Schools, Chapter 766 Approved Special Education Schools, and Special Education Collaboratives and their self-efficacy in regard to effectively executing all the duties outlined in their job descriptions. Results are displayed in Table 59.

Table 59

ANOVA for Self-Efficacy by School Setting

School Setting			N	M	SD
Public Secondary School			69	4.75	.49
Chapter 766 Approved Special Education School			21	4.57	.74
Special Education Collaborative			12	4.42	.66
Summary ANOVA School Setting Effectively Execute Job Duties					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	1.45	2	.726	2.18	.118
Within Groups	32.871	99	.332		
Total	34.324	101			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the ANOVA procedure support the null hypothesis. The school setting is not a significant factor in the self-efficacy beliefs of secondary Special Education

Transition Specialists' ability to execute their job duties as the p-value = .11 which is greater than the alpha, $\alpha = 0.05$, which confirms the null hypothesis.

An ANOVA procedure was run to look at the perceived self-efficacy of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists based on the years they have been working in their current position in their current setting. The years in their position variable was recoded into three groups: 0 – 10 years, 11-20 years, and 21 – 30+ years. Four specific variables related to self-efficacy were examined; executing their job duties, knowledge of the Chapter 688 Referral process, and ability to explain job duties to colleagues in Special and General Education. Results are outlined in Tables 60 – 63 presented below.

Table 60

ANOVA for Self-Efficacy by Years in Setting (Job Duties)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			90	4.66	.60
11-20 years			10	4.80	.42
21-30 + years			2	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA School Setting Effectively Execute Job Duties					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.854	3	.285	.831	.48
Within Groups	33.922	99	.343		
Total	34.777	102			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Based on the ANOVA procedure run for self-efficacy in relation to ability execute all duties of the job compared to years in current position the null hypothesis is supported. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their

position has no impact on their perceived self-efficacy in relation to completing their job duties. The calculated p-value = .48 > α = 0.05, which confirms this.

Table 61

ANOVA for Self-Efficacy by Years in Setting (Chapter 688)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			91	4.67	.51
11-20 years			11	4.73	.42
21-30 + years			2	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA School Setting Chapter 688 Procedural Knowledge					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.337	3	.112	.401	.75
Within Groups	28.292	101	.280		
Total	28.629	104			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the ANOVA procedure run for perceived self-efficacy in relation to Chapter 688 Procedural knowledge compared to years in current position indicates that the null hypothesis is supported. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their knowledge of the Chapter 688 Referral Process. The calculated p-value = .75> α = 0.05, which confirms this.

Table 62

ANOVA for Self-Efficacy by Years in Setting (Special Educators)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			91	4.90	.30
11-20 years			11	4.91	.30
21-30 + years			2	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA School Setting Explaining Job Duties to Special Education Colleagues					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.029	3	.010	.107	.95

Within Groups	9.019	101	.089	
Total	9.048	104		

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the ANOVA procedure run for perceived self-efficacy in relation to explaining job duties to Special Education colleagues by years in current position indicates that the null hypothesis is supported. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their perceived self-efficacy in explaining their job duties to colleagues in Special Education. The calculated p-value = $0.95 > \alpha = 0.05$, confirms this.

Table 63

ANOVA for Self-Efficacy by Years in Setting (General Educators)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			91	4.85	.39
11-20 years			11	4.91	.30
21-30 + years			2	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA School Setting Explaining Job Duties to General Education Colleagues					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.307	3	.102	.677	.56
Within Groups	15.255	101	.151		
Total	15.562	104			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Similarly, the results of the ANOVA procedure run for perceived self-efficacy in relation to explaining job duties to General Education colleagues based on years in current position indicates that the null hypothesis is supported. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their

perceived self-efficacy skills in relation to explaining their job duties to their General Education colleagues. The calculated p-value = .56> α = 0.05, which confirms this.

Further ANOVA procedures were conducted to look at the aptitude for social networking skills in relation to the years a secondary Transition Specialist has been employed in their current position. Tables 64 – 66 display these results.

Table 64

ANOVA for Social Networking by Years in Setting (In-School)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			90	4.09	1.05
11-20 years			11	4.45	.68
21-30 + years			2	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA Years in Current Position In-School Opportunities					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	2.820	3	.94	.90	.44
Within Groups	104.016	100	1.04		
Total	106.837	103			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the ANOVA procedure run for aptitude for Social Networking in relation to creating in-school opportunities for experiential opportunities for students in relation to the number of years worked in their current position are found in Table 64. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their ability to apply their social networking skills. The calculated p-value = 0.44 > α = 0.05, which confirms this.

Table 65

ANOVA for Social Networking by Years in Setting (Non-School Staff)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			91	4.24	1.01
11-20 years			11	4.36	.92
21-30 + years			2	4.00	1.41
Summary ANOVA Years in Current Position Approaching Non-school Personnel					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.273	2	.137	.17	.84
Within Groups	81.227	101	.804		
Total	81.500	103			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the ANOVA procedure run for social networking skills when approaching non-school personnel to create opportunities for experiential learning for students in relation to the number of years worked in their current position are found in Table 65. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their ability to apply social networking skills in relation to this variable. The calculated p-value = 0.84 > α = 0.05, which confirms this.

Table 66

ANOVA for Social Networking Skills by Years in Setting (Families)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			89	3.73	1.03
11-20 years			11	3.91	.94
21-30 + years			2	3.5	.70
Summary ANOVA Years in Current Position Talking to Parents and Families					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.435	2	.218	.209	.81
Within Groups	102.937	99	1.04		
Total	103.373	101			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the ANOVA procedure run for aptitude for social networking skills when talking to parents and families of their students to create opportunities for experiential learning in relation to the number of years worked in their current position are found in Table 66. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their ability to apply their social networking skills in relation to this variable. The calculated p-value = 0.81 > α = 0.05 confirms this.

A one-way ANOVA procedure was run to look at the entrepreneurial leadership skills of secondary Transition Specialists in relation to the number of years they have been employed in their current position. Table 67 outlines the results of this analysis.

Table 67

ANOVA for Entrepreneurial Leadership by Years in Setting (Opportunities)

Years in Setting			N	M	SD
0-10 years			91	4.89	.49
11-20 years			10	4.83	.48
21-30 + years			2	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA Years in Current Position Strive to create new opportunities					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.160	2	.080	.337	.71
Within Groups	23.704	100	.237		
Total	23.864	102			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the one-way ANOVA procedure that was run to examine entrepreneurial leadership skills striving to create new and innovative ways to provide students with transitionally appropriate experiences in relation to the number of years worked

in their current position are found in Table 67. The number of years a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist has worked in their position has no impact on their ability to act as an entrepreneurial leader in relation to this variable. The calculated p-value = 0.71 > α = 0.05 confirms this, indicating that the null hypothesis is correct.

One-way ANOVA procedures were also run to examine the intersectionality between endorsement status as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist and Entrepreneurial Leaderships skills. Skills examined included the ability to work independently, think critically and creatively, and focus on the steps needed to reach a desired outcome based on given facts. The results of these procedures is displayed in Tables 68 – 70.

Table 68

ANOVA for Entrepreneurial Leadership by Years in Setting (Independence)

Endorsement Status			N	M	SD
Endorsed as Transition Specialist			50	4.62	.60
Not Endorsed as a Transition Specialist			6	4.83	.16
Summary ANOVA Endorsement Status Work Independently					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.244	1	.244	.707	.40
Within Groups	18.613	54	.345		
Total	18.857				

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the one-way ANOVA procedure that was run to examine entrepreneurial leadership skills related to working independently in relation to Transition Specialist Endorsement status are displayed in Table 68. Based on the p-value calculated at

$0.40 > \alpha = 0.05$, endorsement status is not a significant indicator of entrepreneurial leadership skills for this variable. Indicating the null hypothesis is correct.

Table 69

ANOVA for Entrepreneurial Leadership by Years in Setting (Creative)

Endorsement Status			N	M	SD
Endorsed as Transition Specialist			50	4.84	.37
Not Endorsed as a Transition Specialist			6	4.50	.54
Summary ANOVA Endorsement Status Think Critically and Creatively					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.619	1	.619	4.06	.04*
Within Groups	8.220	54	.152		
Total	8.839	55			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the one-way ANOVA procedure that was run to examine entrepreneurial leadership skills related thinking critically and creatively in relation to Transition Specialist Endorsement status are displayed in Table 69. Based on the p-value calculated at $0.04 > \alpha = 0.05$, endorsement status is a significant indicator of entrepreneurial leadership skills for this variable. Indicating the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 70

ANOVA for Entrepreneurial Leadership by Years in Setting (Steps)

Endorsement Status			N	M	SD
Endorsed as Transition Specialist			50	4.82	.38
Not Endorsed as a Transition Specialist			6	5.00	.00
Summary ANOVA Endorsement Status Focus on the steps needed to reach desired outcomes					
Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	.174	1	.174	1.27	.26
Within Groups	7.380	54	.137		
Total	7.554	55			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

The results of the one-way ANOVA procedure that was run to examine entrepreneurial leadership skills related to focusing on specific steps to reach a goal in relation to Transition Specialist Endorsement status are displayed in Table 70. Based on the p-value calculated at $0.26 > \alpha = 0.05$, endorsement status is not a significant indicator of entrepreneurial leadership skills for this variable. Indicating the null hypothesis is correct.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 presented the results of a comprehensive data analysis protocol which utilized quantitative data analysis procedures. A variety of statistical analyses were conducted to examine the educational backgrounds and employment histories as well as the entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived levels of self-efficacy, and the social networking skills of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. Specifically, those working in Public Secondary Schools, Chapter 766 Approved Special Education Schools, and Special Education Collaboratives. Data was examined using descriptive statistical measures, T-Test, and ANOVA procedures. The final chapter will discuss the findings, implications and recommendations resulting from this study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study was designed to capture information on the backgrounds and intrinsic personal qualities of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists employed in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Specifically, those working in Public Secondary Schools, Special Education Collaboratives and Chapter 766 Approved Special Education schools. Using a variety of statistical analysis measures, this quantitative, correlational study provided insight into this unique group of Special Educators working in this specific role. In this chapter, I will summarize my findings, discuss potential limitations within my work, and provide implications as well as recommendations for further study.

Summary of Research Findings

To begin, my study was conducted in the spring of 2017 and was conducted solely in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I contacted all Public Secondary Schools, Chapter 766 Approved Special Education Schools, and Special Education Collaboratives to identify the secondary Special Education Transition Specialist or person working in that capacity in each

setting. Ultimately 169 questionnaires were sent to potential respondents. Of those, 105 responded, yielding a 62.1% response rate.

Demographically, the respondents were 84.8% female and 15.2% male. They were 99% Caucasian and 65.7% of them were under 49 years old. These statistics align with data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (n.d.) on the demographics of educators employed in Massachusetts.

Of the respondents, 39% of them reported having a professional title that was Transition Specialist or Coordinator. But, 57% of the total group, including the 39% previously mentioned had a title that included the word "Transition." Further, 79% of the total respondent group held professional titles which indicated a leadership position and included the words "Administrator, Director, Coordinator, Specialist, etc.".

Only 21% of the total respondent group reported holding a Transition Specialist Endorsement through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Of the total respondent group, 24.8% are planning to pursue endorsement or are in the process of pursuing it, while 54.2% have no plans to pursue the Transition Specialist endorsement.

A total of 71.5% of the total respondent group reported being licensed in Special Education through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Further, of that group, 67.5% are licensed in Moderate Disabilities. Additionally, 7.5% of respondents hold a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor License through the Commonwealth.

Of those working as Transition Specialists presently, 86.7% have worked in their currently position for 10 years or less, with over half of that group, 46.7% working in their current position for between 4 – 10 years. Further, of the three settings examined, Public Secondary Schools, Chapter 766 Approved Special Education Schools, and Special Education Collaboratives, a vast majority report having had a secondary Transition Specialist on staff for the last 10 years.

In each of the three settings examined, 25.7% of the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Public Secondary schools have a Transition Specialist Endorsement, 21.4% of those working in Special Education Collaboratives are endorsed and just 4.8% of those in Chapter 766 Schools are endorsed. Additionally, 67.9% of those endorsed across the three settings have no plans to pursue the Transition Specialist Endorsement in the future.

Further, 41% of those currently employed as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists across the Commonwealth reported had a previous career outside of this role. Of those, 30.2% worked in other careers in the Education and Training career cluster and 30.2% worked in the Health Sciences (Career Clusters, n.d).

Educationally, 61% of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported having earned a Master's level degree and 20.9% of respondents reported holding an advanced degree including a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, Ed.D., or Ph.D. Further, a majority of the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists employed in Massachusetts were educated here.

For undergraduate education, 63.6% attended public colleges and universities and of those 40% were in Massachusetts. For Master's level studies, 47.9% attended public colleges and universities. Of that 47.9%, 76.1% were educated in Massachusetts. Further, 100% of the advanced degrees earned were earned here in Massachusetts.

Specific studies were varied, but a majority of the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists who provided their undergraduate majors reported studying education and psychology, 32.6% and 23.8% respectively. Further, 49.4% of the graduate degrees held are in Moderate and/or Severe Special Education, 9.7% are in Education, 9.7% are in Counseling, and 7.2% are in Vocational Rehabilitation. Indicating that 76% of those working in the field as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists are trained in education or a form of counseling.

Secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported a high level of entrepreneurial leadership skills overall. Indicating that they feel they are innovative, problem solvers who enact these qualities to a great extent in their work. The number of years a person has been employed in their position did not seem to impact their entrepreneurial leadership skills overall, but there were a few areas where the data suggested some deficits.

Specifically, data analysis showed that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists who are endorsed had slightly stronger entrepreneurial leadership skills than those who do not hold this endorsement. This was especially true in the areas of being both a critical and creative thinker and utilizing cognitive ambidexterity strategies. Further, mean

scores across descriptive categories primarily indicated that those who were endorsed used slightly higher levels of entrepreneurial leadership skills in their work than those who are not.

In regard to perceived levels of self-efficacy, secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported having high levels across the board in most categories. They feel efficacious about their abilities to explain the Chapter 688 referral process and the transition planning process. However, when examined more closely, there were some significant areas where endorsed Transition Specialists felt more efficacious than those who are not endorsed.

When working with state agencies, the entire group reported that the agencies they felt least efficacious about working with were the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and the Department of Mental Health. They all also reported feeling most efficacious in relation to the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. However, those endorsed as Transition Specialists reported higher mean scores across all six agencies than those who are not endorsed.

Further, through statistical analysis it was found that there is a statistically significant difference between those who have Transition Specialist endorsements and those who do not in relation to developing experiential learning opportunities for students and explaining the purpose of these experiences to non-profit organization leadership. Indicating that when working with off-campus entities to create opportunity, those who are endorsed have more self-efficacy when completing these tasks.

It was also found that in relation to disability category, secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported that they felt less efficacious when working with students with sensory and physical impairments based on their mean scores. Further, all endorsed Transition Specialists had higher mean scores across all disability categories than those who are not endorsed.

Similar results were found in relation to the self-efficacy of secondary Transition Specialists and their ability to discuss the tenets of transition planning. All felt most comfortable discussing post-secondary education options, followed by employment options and community living options. However, those who have endorsements reported high levels of self-efficacy in relation to explaining the post-secondary transition planning process to students based on their disability related needs and post-secondary vision. However, respondents reported a slightly lower sense of self-efficacy when they are explaining this process and need to consider a student's socio-economic status in the transition planning process.

Finally, when self-efficacy was examined in relation to years in current position, there was no statistical significance between the length of time a person has been employed as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist and their perceived levels of self-efficacy when talking to school staff and explaining their position to others.

The social networking skills of secondary Transition Specialists was found to be variable dependent on the setting. When it came to on campus interactions, all Transition Specialists indicated that they feel they have a great extent of skill in creating experiential

learning opportunities for students. This included talking to staff members in person and via email.

Off campus, it was found that overall, secondary Transition Specialists felt less likely to enact social networking skills to create experiential learning experiences for their students. There was also a statistically significant difference between the social networking skills of endorsed versus non endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in their ability to utilize social networking skills off-campus to create partnerships and in their ability to email non-school personnel to discuss these potential opportunities.

In relation to communicating with parents and families, secondary Transition Specialists overall reported that those who hold endorsements are more likely to approach them to discuss opportunities they may know of in the community for experiential learning opportunities. Further, those with endorsements reported that they would be more likely to ask parents and families about opportunities to activate their social networks.

In summary, the results and findings of my study indicate that a majority of secondary Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are female, have been working in their positions for 4-10 years, and are mostly employed in Public Secondary Schools and Special Education Collaboratives.

They have been primarily educated in Massachusetts. A majority of undergraduates studied education and/or psychology and over half hold Master's level degrees in the fields

of Education and/or Psychology. Approximately one fifth of them have pursued advanced degrees.

Professionally, just over half have a title that includes the word “Transition” in it, but only one fifth of the total group are endorsed as Transition Specialists. Half of the total group has no plans to pursue the Transition Specialist endorsement offered through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education despite being employed in this field. Additionally, a majority of those employed in this role are professionally licensed in Moderate and Severe Disabilities .

Further, throughout the results it is evident that those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education report having higher levels of entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived levels of self-efficacy, and social networking skills than those who are not endorsed. Years employed in their current position and current setting do not appear to have any significance in the reported levels of skill.

Limitations

When considering the full range of my quantitative, statewide study, it is important to consider what factors may limit the results. Despite measures taken to negate possible limitations (Creswell, 2009), it is likely that limitations did impact the findings.

First, it is likely that my positionality as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist in Massachusetts may have influenced the response rate. Being that 62.1% of

those who received questionnaires responded, it is important to note that I have been doing this work for 13 years. I know many of the people working in this capacity personally, belong to a group of statewide Transition Specialists and Coordinators, and have presented my work at the only statewide Transition Capacity Building Conference (Callison & Baldassari, 2013). It is possible if I was not me, that I would not have had the same level of participation.

Second, to build on my positionality, I designed my study's theoretical framework based on my own experiences and understanding of the competencies required in the position of secondary Special Education Transition Specialist (CEC, 2013, Winchester Public Schools, 2014) as well as the work of Tilson and Simonsen (2013). Given that I am Caucasian female secondary Transition Specialist, it is likely that my position could influence how I look at the role and in turn impact the way I created the questionnaire.

Third, not all respondents identify solely as a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist. In fact, only 21% solely work in this capacity in their setting. Therefore, it is important to consider that if a person is not solely a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist that they may not complete all of the duties of this job and/or may be less familiar with some of the knowledge and competencies required. This could skew their results.

Fourth, self-reporting can lead to results that potentially lack objectivity (Almeida, Faria, & Queiros, 2017). Asking respondents to rate themselves allowed for the respondents to give their opinion of their skills and abilities in relation to specific duties of their jobs as

secondary Special Education Transition Specialists. It does not however, guarantee that the respondents are not either underestimating or overestimating their abilities in their responses.

Discussion of Findings

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist holds a position which requires a variety of skills, competencies, and knowledge to complete (Morgan, Callow-Heusser, Horrocks, et al., 2014). This role, though not federally mandated (Youth on the Move, 2012) was born out of a need to provide coordination of services and planning for students with disabilities who are transitioning from secondary education to adult life (DeFur & Taymans, 1995; IDEA, 1997).

Yet, it was only during the past decade that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts introduced a process by which those working in this role could become endorsed as Transition Specialists (MA DESE, 2013). Even with this legislative push and the introduction of Transition Leadership Certificate Programs in higher education settings, only 21% of the respondents in my study are endorsed as Transition Specialists, 24.8% report that they are planning to pursue this endorsement, and 54.2% of the respondents said they have no plans to pursue it. Further, only 39% of the group reported having a professional title of solely Transition Specialist or Coordinator.

My findings indicate that despite transition services being federally mandated for students with disabilities (IDEA, 1997; Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walter-Thomas, 2019) less than half of those employed in the Commonwealth to oversee these services are

professionally endorsed to do so. It is also evident that they have not had much, if any, professional training around the transition planning process (Morningstar, Kyeong-Hwa, & Clark, 2008) and most have no plan to pursue it. Further, a majority of the people doing this work also have other roles and responsibilities within their school setting (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).

The fact that the majority of the secondary Special Education Transition Specialists employed in the Commonwealth are not endorsed is important to note when interpreting the results of my study. Overall, those who reported holding an endorsement as a Transition Specialist have slightly stronger entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived levels of self-efficacy, and social networking savvy than those who do not hold the endorsement.

Indicating that endorsed Transition Specialists are better prepared to assist students with the transition planning process than those without the endorsement.

This is important to note, as going through a teacher preparation program to prepare for the role of a Transition Specialist has been shown to ultimately lead to better student outcomes, community and family engagement, and greater access to community-based opportunities (Viel-Ruma et. al., 2010; Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, Teo, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2018).

Based on the results, endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported that they were better equipped to act as entrepreneurial leaders in their work than their non endorsed peers. Specifically, those who are endorsed, have the skills to be creative,

innovative leaders (Leonard, 2013) and employ cognitive ambidexterity strategies in their work (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, & Wilson, 2013). Based on the slightly higher mean scores of those with the Transition Specialist endorsement it was evident that they feel better able to employ soft skills to collaborate and build connections with community partners than their non endorsed peers (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).

Similarly, endorsed secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported higher levels of self-efficacy than those without the endorsement. Specifically, those who hold the endorsement believe in their ability to develop community-based partnerships and create relationships on behalf of students in off-campus settings like non-profit organizations and local businesses (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009; Test, Fowler, Richter et. al., 2009; CEC, 2013).

However, it is important to note that secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported less self-efficacy when discussing transition planning with students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. In the 2019-2020 school year, 42.1% of the students enrolled in Massachusetts schools are identified as races other than White/Caucasian (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). This includes students who are African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, and who identify as multi-race. Given that 99% of the respondents in my study identify as White/Caucasian, this may explain the notable lack in self-efficacy.

Further, Transition Specialists are expected to work with students across disability categories, discuss transition planning processes and procedures with students and their

families, connect students to state agencies, and assist with the process of planning for the transition to adult life (Kohler, 1996; Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009; CEC, 2013). In each of the job-related tasks areas, statistical significance was found in relation to the skills of those who hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement and those who do not. Supporting the idea that those who are endorsed have higher levels of self-efficacy and therefore can better support students with the transition planning process across competency areas (CEC, 2013).

The same was found to be true with social networking savvy as well. Through statistical analysis, it was confirmed that endorsed Transition Specialists across the Commonwealth have higher levels of social networking skills than their non-endorsed peers. Specifically, they are more versed in creating off-campus partnerships for students with disabilities. The same was true in relation to speaking with parents and families about potential experiential learning opportunities for students off-campus.

The data further supports the body of literature discussed in Chapter 2 which outlines the importance of creating experiential learning opportunities and maintaining a collaborative relationship with parents, families and other stakeholders by using social networking savvy (Morningstar, Kim, & Clark, 2009; Tetreault, 2015). A lack of these skills has been found to be a barrier to creating experiential learning opportunities and student internships (Riesen, Morgan, Schultz & Kupferman, 2014).

The results of my study directly support the rich body of literature that exists about secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in the Commonwealth. Those who are currently employed as a Transition Specialist, either full time or in conjunction with other

duties (Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009), need to be properly educated on the competencies of transition planning to be successful (Morningstar, Kim and Clark (2009). It is evident when reviewing the results that those who hold the endorsement of Transition Specialists are slightly better prepared to do this work than those who do not have the endorsement.

Implications

The implications of my study suggest that both policy and practice should be examined and potentially revised to ensure that those who are working as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts are properly prepared and endorsed to complete the duties required of this unique role.

As discussed in Chapter 1, eight years ago, legislation known as Chapter 51 of the Acts of 2012 was passed in Massachusetts (Youth on the Move, 2012). This legislation allowed for the creation of the Transition Specialist Endorsement by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It also prompted the creation of Transition Specialist Certification Programs in higher education settings across the Commonwealth (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

The creation of this endorsement and subsequent programming in higher education was in response to the need for a person with expertise in transition planning to oversee the services legally mandated for students in secondary Special Education beginning at the age of 14 (IDEA, 1997). Though within Special Education people had been assigned to do this work for decades, there were no higher education programs in Massachusetts that allowed for

specialized training and recognition of these skills (DeFur & Taymans, 1995; Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009; Morningstar, Hirano, Roberts-Dahm, Teo, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2018).

The legislation did not however, include a requirement that public secondary schools, Chapter 766 Approved Schools, or Special Education Collaboratives employ secondary Special Education Transition Specialists who are endorsed or have plans to pursue endorsement (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). Though school districts and programs have the option to require an employee to hold or get the endorsement as a condition of employment, it is not mandated that they must have it to be considered a Transition Specialist or provide transition services to students with disabilities (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

My study revealed that since the enactment of the legislation in 2012, the numbers of secondary Special Educators employed in this role has increased over the past 4-10 years in public secondary schools, Chapter 766 Approved Schools and Special Education Collaboratives. Further, results of my study demonstrated that those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists are more prepared to complete the job-related duties required of this position than those who are not endorsed. Specifically, they reported having higher levels of entrepreneurial leadership skill, perceived self-efficacy skills, and a higher aptitude for social networking.

The fact that the results indicated that those with Transition Specialist endorsements reported higher levels of skill than those who are not endorsed may be related to the fact that

those who hold endorsements have completed advanced graduate level coursework focused on building their skills in all of the transition planning competencies (University of Massachusetts Boston, 2019). Specifically, coursework in the Graduate Certificate in Special Education with a Concentration in Transition Leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Boston allows practitioners to

> "gain the skills necessary to focus on employment, college preparation, and independent living skills for students with disabilities ages 14-22…also develop the leadership skills necessary to promote system-wide transition supports and services in their school district (University of Massachusetts Boston, 2019).

This advanced training may indicate why the respondents who reported being endorsed also reported higher levels of entrepreneurial leadership skills, self-efficacy and social networking skills.

Yet, only 21% of respondents reported holding the Transition Specialist Endorsement issued by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. But, 57% of those doing this work have a professional title that includes the word "transition." Indicating that more than half of those who are considered to be overseeing legally mandated transition services for students with disabilities have not been endorsed to do so (IDEA, 1997, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

Research in the area of transition planning and teacher training has consistently shown that those doing the work of Transition Specialists in Special Education do not usually

receive more than 1-2 courses on transition planning as part of their Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geiger, & Morningstar, 2003; Morningstar, Kyeong-Hwa, & Clark, 2008; Li, Bassett & Hutchinson, 2009). They report feeling unprepared to complete parts of their jobs including creating social networks, building vocational programming and interacting with state agencies and community partners due to lack of training and preparation (Morningstar, Kim, & Clark, 2009; Riesen, Morgan, Schultz, & Kupferman, 2014; Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walter-Thomas, 2019).

Transition planning services are a crucial, legally required element of special education programming to prepare students with disabilities for post-secondary life (IDEA, 1997; Kohler & Field, 2003). The provision of these services requires a specific person to oversee this process for students with disabilities to ensure they are prepared to transition from secondary school services to adult services (Shogren & Plotner, 2012). But in Massachusetts these people are not required to be endorsed as Transition Specialists and can complete these duties in conjunction with other roles (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).

Having a Transition Specialist Endorsement available to secondary Special Education practitioners that requires additional higher education courses is just one step in the process. Though a professional can choose to pursue higher education in transition planning to earn this endorsement, it is not required by the Commonwealth as a condition of employment as a Transition Specialist (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). Yet, for other positions in secondary Special Education, also noted as Specialists, specifically Reading, Speech and Language Pathologists and Instructional Technology, there

is a requirement that practitioners will complete programming specific to their area of expertise (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

Ultimately, my study demonstrated that those with endorsements as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists reported that they have stronger skills needed to complete the various duties of a Transition Specialist than those who are not endorsed by the Commonwealth (CEC, 2013).

My study also showed that since the endorsement is not legally required within the Commonwealth over half of those people employed as Transition Specialists have no plans to get the endorsement. This implies that there is a disconnect between the availability of the endorsement, legal statues demanding Transition Specialists be endorsed, and potentially the quality of transition related services students with disabilities will receive from non-endorsed practitioners.

Recommendations

School Districts. Human Resources departments can use my study's findings to help craft questions they may ask when interviewing candidates. This could help to ensure the candidate has the appropriate skills and competencies (CEC, 2013) as well as the entrepreneurial leadership skills, self-efficacy beliefs, and social networking savvy outlined in my work.

Further, school settings can consider these results as they determine what qualifications they prefer in a secondary Special Education Transition Specialist.

Considering the level of skill reported was higher in those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists than those who are not, this could be an area of concern. Further, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019) leaves it up to the district or program's discretion to decide if they will employ a Transition Specialist who holds this endorsement. School staff and hiring managers should consider if they will require this endorsement as a condition of employment for their Transition Specialist.

Higher Education. Outreach for recruitment within school settings may be needed to connect with those who are not currently endorsed. Being that 54.2% of those currently in this position across the Commonwealth are not planning to become endorsed, there is a demonstrated need to connect with those people to provide them with information on endorsement programs available.

Further Research. As my work was inspired by Tilson and Simonsen (2013) there are ways that this study could be inspiration for future research. My study could be replicated in other states to look at the scope of the skills utilized by secondary Transition Specialists. It could also be used as a guide to determine if those who are endorsed as Transition Specialists versus those who are not have similar profiles in other states.

Further, research could also be conducted that examines the cultural competence of Transition Specialists as Tilson and Simonsen (2013) looked at that quality in Employment Specialists. Given that 99% of the respondents in my study reported identifying as White/Caucasian and at the same time reported the lowest area of self-efficacy in engaging in transition planning with students with diverse socio-economic backgrounds; cultural

competence (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013), seems like an area that could be further explored in future research.

Also, not every state in the United States has teacher Transition Endorsement options and educational programs. My work could provide further information on those employed in this role and what their qualifications are. Further, these studies do not all need to be quantitative in nature. Future qualitative and mixed methods studies could be constructed to explore the reasons people choose work as secondary Special Education Transition Specialists as well as their decision to pursue or not pursue Transition Endorsement programming in Massachusetts and beyond.

Conclusion

This quantitative and comparative study examined the educational and professional backgrounds as well as the intrinsic professional qualities of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Public Secondary Schools, Chapter 766 Special Education Approved Schools and Special Education Collaboratives. This study revealed that despite a legislative push to offer a Transition Specialist Endorsement in the Commonwealth, only 21% of those employed in this capacity are actually endorsed. Additionally, despite this push, it is not a legal requirement that a person employed in this capacity be endorsed as a condition of their employment. Further, my study provided evidence that those who hold the Transition Specialist Endorsement have higher levels of entrepreneurial leadership skills, self-efficacy, and social networking skills

than those who do not. Leading them to be more likely to be able to effectively complete the tasks and duties of this nuanced role in secondary Special Education.

Though my work is a small glimpse into the backgrounds and professional qualities of secondary Special Education Transition Specialists in Massachusetts, I hope that it peaks the interest of those in my field and inspires others to continue researching these unique and much needed leaders in secondary Special Education. May this study serve as a jumping off point for other researchers who endeavor to fill the gap in the literature and come to better understand the qualities and skills needed to support students with disabilities as they transition from high school into post-secondary life.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

The Backgrounds and Personal Qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts

Statewide Research Study

Researcher: Jennifer Carr Callison (University of Massachusetts/Boston)

Part One: Personal Qualities

Directions: Read each statement. Circle the answer that aligns with your answer.

Statement	**Not at All**	**Very Little**	**To Some Extent**	**To a Great Extent**
I believe I can effectively execute all of the duties outlined in my job description.	1	2	3	4
I believe I have the ability to act as the liaison between my school, my students and:				
The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).	1	2	3	4
The Department of Developmental Services (DDS).	1	2	3	4
The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH).	1	2	3	4
The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB).	1	2	3	4
The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH).	1	2	3	4
The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF).	1	2	3	4
I believe I can develop partnerships with local businesses to create pre-vocational and internship opportunities for:				
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.	1	2	3	4
Students with Developmental Delays.	1	2	3	4
Students with Intellectual Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Sensory Impairments (Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairments, Deafblind).	1	2	3	4
Students with Neurological Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Emotional Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Communication Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Physical Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Health Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Specific Learning Disabilities.	1	2	3	4

I consider myself knowledgeable about the Chapter 688 Referral Process in Massachusetts.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can clearly articulate the steps to file and follow up on a Chapter 688 Referral for a student.	1	2	3	4
I believe I am able to clearly explain my job-related duties to Special Education staff members.	1	2	3	4
I believe I am able to clearly describe my job-related duties to General Education staff members.	1	2	3	4
	Not at All	**Very Little**	**To Some Extent**	**To a Great Extent**
I am comfortable discussing the transition planning process in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings for:				
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.	1	2	3	4
Students with Developmental Delays.	1	2	3	4
Students with Intellectual Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Sensory Impairments (Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairments and students who are Deafblind).	1	2	3	4
Students with Neurological Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Emotional Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Physical Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Health Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Specific Learning Disabilities.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can build partnerships with local businesses to create experiential learning opportunities as needed.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can build partnerships with local non-profit organizations to create experiential learning opportunities as needed.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can concisely explain my purpose and student needs to local business leaders during the process of creating experiential learning opportunities.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can concisely explain my purpose and student needs to non-profit organization management during the process of creating experiential learning opportunities.	1	2	3	4
I believe I am extremely knowledgeable when discussing post-secondary education options with students and families.	1	2	3	4
I believe I am extremely knowledgeable when discussing post-secondary employment options with students and families.	1	2	3	4
I believe I am extremely knowledgeable when discussing post-secondary community living and recreation options with students and families.	1	2	3	4

I believe I can clearly explain the post-secondary transition planning process to students and families based on their:				
Individual special needs	1	2	3	4
Individual socio-economic situation.	1	2	3	4
Student's post-secondary vision statement.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can explain the resources available to students through state funded post-secondary services for:				
Students with Developmental and Intellectual Impairments	1	2	3	4
Students with Emotional Impairments.	1	2	3	4
Students with Sensory Impairments.	1	2	3	4
	Not at All	**Very Little**	**To Some Extent**	**To a Great Extent**
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.	1	2	3	4
I believe I can clearly describe the difference between high school and post-secondary education's disability related services.	1	2	3	4
I am able to leverage my social connections with colleagues to create on-campus experiential learning opportunities.	1	2	3	4
I will email the staff at my school to inquire about opportunities to create on-campus experiential learning opportunities.	1	2	3	4
I will ask staff in person about creating on-campus experiential learning opportunities.	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable using social networking to create experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I have created a network of connections with various departments at my school to assist with finding and creating experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I am able to utilize my social networking skills to create off campus experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable activating my social network to create off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I will email non-school personnel to ask about creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I will approach non-school personnel in person to ask about creating off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I will approach parents and families to ask for assistance in creating off-campus internship opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4
I will utilize the social networks of parents and families to identify and contact off-campus businesses and non-profits to identify experiential learning opportunities for students.	1	2	3	4

I look to find ways to improve transitionally based programs within my school setting.	1	2	3	4
I look to find opportunities to grow transitionally based programs within my school setting.	1	2	3	4
I strive to create new and innovative ways to provide students with transitionally appropriate educational experiences based on their individual needs.	1	2	3	4
I am able to see problems within my work and turn them into opportunities.	1	2	3	4
	Not at All	**Very Little**	**To Some Extent**	**To A Great Extent**
I am able to work independently.	1	2	3	4
I am easily discouraged by my failures at work.	1	2	3	4
I turn failures at work into new opportunities.	1	2	3	4
I don't take "no" for an answer in my work.	1	2	3	4
I am able to make adjustments to my work when I find something I am doing isn't working.	1	2	3	4
I am able to take various perspectives into account in my work.	1	2	3	4
I am able to follow rules set forth by my school	1	2	3	4
I find I am able to think critically and creatively at the same time.	1	2	3	4
I am able to focus on the steps needed to reach a desired outcome based on the facts given.	1	2	3	4

Part Two: Background Qualities

Directions: Read each question below. Where appropriate put an X next to the item that best describes you. When prompted, write in answers as needed.

Section One: Special Education Employment & Credentials

What type of setting do you work in?

_____ Public Secondary School

_____ Chapter 766 Approved School

_____ Special Education Collaborative

Does your setting currently employ a person as a Transition Specialist/Coordinator?

_____ Yes, my setting does have a person who does this job exclusively

_____ No, my setting does not have a person who does this job exclusively

_____ No, but my setting has several people who complete parts of this job

_____ I've never heard of a Transition Specialist/Coordinator before.

What is the title of your current position?

_____ Transition Specialist/Coordinator

_____ Special Education Teacher

_____ Special Education Administrator

_____ School Psychologist

_____ Other: _____

How many years have you held this position in this specific setting?

_____ 0 – 3 years

_____ 4 – 10 years

_____ 11 – 20 years

_____ 21 – 30 years

_____ 30 + years

How many years have you been working in the field of Special Education overall?

_____ 0 – 3 years

_____ 4 – 10 years

_____ 11 – 20 years

_____ 21 – 30 years

_____ 30 + years

What is your current licensure with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)?

LICENSE TYPE:

_____ Temporary

_____ Preliminary

_____ Initial

_____ Professional

What field (content area(s)) do you hold license(s) in?

_____

Do you hold a Transition Specialist Endorsement through the DESE?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If No, are you planning to or currently working towards earning a Transition Specialist Endorsement?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Section Two: Former Career & Education

Did you have another career or profession prior to working in Special Education?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If yes, what was your former profession?

_____

What was the reason you decided to switch careers into Special Education (check all that apply)?

_____ Summers Off/Ample vacation time

_____ Interest in helping others learn

_____ Had friend/family member who was a teacher (any subject/content area)

_____ Had friend/family member with a disability who inspired me

_____ Other:

_____

What was the reason you decided to become a Transition Specialist (check all that apply)?

_____ My educational background gave me the skills needed for this position

_____ My employment history gave me the skills needed for this position

_____ My education and employment history gave me the skills needed for this position

_____ I wanted to work in Special Education but didn't want to be a classroom teacher

_____ Other:

_____

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

_____ Associates Degree

_____ Bachelor's Degree

_____ Master's Degree

_____ Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS)

_____ Doctor of Education/Doctor of Philosophy (Ed.D./Ph.D.)

_____ Other: _____

What college(s) did you attend and for what degree?

College Name	State	Major	Minor
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Section Three: Personal Demographics

What is your age range?

_____ 20 – 24

_____ 25 – 39

_____ 40 – 49

_____ 50 – 59

_____ 60 plus

What is your gender?

_____ Male

_____ Female

What is your Race/Ethnicity?

_____ White/Caucasian

_____ African American

_____ Asian American

_____ Hispanic

_____ Other: _____

Thank you for completing my survey.

Your responses will be used as part of doctoral research centered on the Backgrounds and Personal Qualities of Transition Specialists working in Special Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

To thank you for your time, I'd like to offer you a $5.00 gift card to Dunkin Donuts. To receive your gift card, please put your name and address below. Gift cards will be mailed upon receipt of completed surveys.

Please know that your personal information will be kept anonymous and confidential. It will only be used to mail you your gift card.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

If you would like additional information about my project, please reach out. My contact information is listed below:

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Carr Callison

jennifercarrcallison@gmail.com
781-812-7301 (cell)

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

University of Massachusetts Boston

College of Education and Human Development

Research Study:

The Backgrounds and Personal Qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts

Dear Transition Specialist and/or Special Education Director/Supervisor,

You are invited to take part in a research project I am conducting regarding the Backgrounds and Personal Qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. This project is open to all Transition Specialists, those working in this capacity under a different title, or the Special Education Supervisor/Director in your school. The enclosed questionnaire will ask you to answer a variety of questions regarding your work as a Transition Specialist, as well as your educational and employment histories.

This questionnaire will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. Those who complete it are eligible to receive a $5.00 gift card.

Please note that your participation in this study is confidential. However, if you'd like to receive a $5.00 gift card, you will need to provide your name, mailing address, and phone number at the end of the questionnaire. This information will not be connected to your survey responses.

This study has been approved by the UMass Boston Institutional Review Board.

For more information regarding this study you are welcome to contact me via email at Jennifer.Carr002@umb.edu or via phone at 781-812-7301. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Carr Callison
Principal Investigator

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Backgrounds and Personal Qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts

Informed Consent Form

University of Massachusetts Boston
College of Education and Human Development
Department of Leadership in Education
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Leadership in Education
College of Education and Human Development
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125

Introduction and Contact Information

You are being asked to complete a questionnaire for a research project that is examining the backgrounds and personal qualities of Transition Specialists in Massachusetts. Please review this form and if you have questions please contact Jennifer Carr Callison at Jennifer.carr002@umb.edu or via phone at 781-812-7301.

Description of the Project

This study involves a brief questionnaire and will ask you to provide basic demographic information as well as answer questions regarding your education and employment histories. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the backgrounds and personal qualities of Transition Specialists employed in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Public Secondary Schools, Chapter 766 Approved Special Education Schools, and Special Education Collaboratives. After completing this questionnaire, you will be given the opportunity to receive a $5 gift card to Dunkin Donuts. To receive this offer, you will be asked to provide your contact information including name, address and phone number.

Risks and Benefits

There is no direct risk or benefit involved with participating in this study.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this research is confidential. This means that information gathered will not be utilized in a way that would expose your identity. To be sure of this, confidentiality measures will be taken. Data collected in the form questionnaire responses will be labeled with numbers and not connected to names. The information you may choose to provide for your gift card will not be connected to your questionnaire responses. Any information regarding incentives I receive will be kept in a separate, secure computer file that will only be accessible by the principal investigator on this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation is voluntary. If you do participate, you can stop participating in this project at any time without any consequence.

Rights

If you have questions about your involvement in this research project, please contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Wenfan Yan. My phone number is 781-812-7301 and my email is Jennifer.carr002@umb.edu. Dr. Yan can be reach at 617-287-4873 or via email at Wenfan.yan@umb.edu.

Thank you for participation in my study.

APPENDIX D

INITIAL EMAIL

Dear [name inserted here of appropriate contact person],

My name is Jenn Callison. I am a PhD Candidate at UMass Boston. I am conducting a study that is centered on backgrounds and personal qualities of Transition Specialists in secondary Special Education in Massachusetts. I was hoping you could point me in the right direction.

I am looking to find out who acts as the Transition Specialist for your high school and/or your school district.

I appreciate any help you can give me. I hope to identify this person by name so that I may reach out and send them my questionnaire.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about my research project.

Thank you,

Jenn Callison

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