**Section 1—Introduction- Research Question (50)**

1. For this research project I will be studying which types of transition programs for students with disabilities help them achieve independence after high school. Independence will have different definitions for different students depending on the level of their disability. For some students, independence will be attending college and living on their own just like their peers without disabilities. For other students, it will be attending vocational programs, working full time jobs without assistance, or working in assisted environments.
2. Transition planning and programs are important for students with disabilities because they “enable young people with disabilities to become productive and independent member within the mainstream of society” (p.38). [Defur, S.H] “Transition outcomes are strongly influenced by student and family characteristics, economic conditions, community contexts, and availability of services” (p. 181) according to Kohler and Field. [Kohler and Field] Better understanding by administrators and teachers of the most effective ways to implement transition planning for children in schools will help school districts create and implement more successful transition programs. When school districts have a strong understanding of transition programs they can work more efficiently within their communities to establish relationships to build strong transition programs for students during school and after graduation.
3. What features of transition programs for students with disabilities (both learning and physical) offered during high school and after graduation effect post-graduation outcomes? Specifically, do transition plans that offer programs such as community-based instruction (CBI) help students obtain employment after high school? Further, to what extent does the participation of parents and/or students in their individual transition plan impact outcomes after graduation? Finally, what role does teacher training in transition planning have on student outcomes?
4. For this study on transition plans I will use a quantitative approach to my research.

**Section 2- General and Specific Rationales (50)**

1. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the proportion of the population with disabilities who were employed was 19.1 percent. The proportion of the population of persons without a disability was 65.9 percent. 31 percent of people with disabilities that were employed held only part time jobs in contrast to non-disabled persons who held only part time jobs 17 percent of the time. Persons with disabilities are more likely to be self-employed than those without disabilities. Joblessness and even part time jobs can leave people without healthcare causing financial hardship for both them and their families. Low income jobs can create homelessness also placing financial hardship on family members and requiring dependence on government programs for help. Creating programs to help people with disabilities, both physical and intellectual in nature, to prepare them for and assist them in finding jobs can reduce financial hardships on the person, their families, and the community.
2. Transition programs implemented by local school districts can help to significantly improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Though there are economic and social benefits associated with these programs, many districts do not implement them because of cost, or the programs differ significantly even within states. The specific rationale for this study is to determine precisely what factors make a transition program successful and quantify the benefits of implementing these programs. This study should aid policy makers in developing appropriate transition plans for their communities and school districts.

**Section 3- Identify the Relevant Areas of Literature (30)**

**Section 4 – Context for the Study (20)**

This study will examine the educational and career trajectories of students in special education programs within the state of Georgia. The study will encompass students 8th grade and beyond who are currently enrolled in a special education program. The objective is to differentiate between school districts within the same state in terms of their implementation of transition planning services.

**Section 5 – Subjects**

Students will be selected for the study based on the following criterion:

* Enrolled in a special education program
* Between 500 and 1,000 students
* Age: 8th grade students
* Race: racial makeup should be representative of the Georgia population as a whole
* Gender: gender composition should be representative of the Georgia population as a whole

To select the school districts for inclusion in the study, the following characteristics will be taken into account:

* Select school districts across the state of Georgia
  + Balance rural, urban, and suburban
  + Balance school district size
  + Balance school district budget
* Select xxx number of districts that meet each criterion

This sampling technique is an example of non-probability sampling which ensures the sample represents the spectrum of school districts within the state.

**Section 6 – Kinds of Data**

Copy of IEP and transition plan, list of people involved in creating those documents (family, teachers, etc.), interview teachers to understand programs, career outcomes

For this study a variety of data types and sources will be used. First, I will collect copies of the IEPs and transition plans for each student in the study for every year they are in school. This data provides evidence of students’ goals, identifies areas for improvement, and records progress towards goals. While this data in its raw form is qualitative (e.g., text), I will produce categorical variables that represent different types of plans and improvement areas. Further, I can derive a measure for degree of progress towards the stated goals.

Second, I will collect information regarding who was involved in the creation of the IEP and transition plan for each student. Prior literature shows that the success of a transition plan can be highly dependent upon involvement of family members as well as teachers (cite). I will create categorical variables from this data to represent involvement of parents, other family, and teachers.

Third, I will survey special education teachers to identify the inclusion of community based instruction (CBI) in the special education program. Specifically, I will ask these questions:

1. Is community based instruction a part of your programs transition planning? Responses: Yes, No.
2. To what extent does CBI play a role in your special education curriculum? Responses: 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 2 = Not much, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = A good bit, 5 = Very much).
3. How much time do your students spend engaged in CBI? Responses: Fixed ranked options (once per week, once every other week, once a month, less often than once a month).

Finally, I will obtain career outcome data for each of the students in the sample. Specifically, I will determine whether or not they have attended some college, vocational school, or have obtained employment. I can assign a categorical variable to each potential outcome. Not achieving any of these outcomes would not be considered a success in this study.