



College and Career Readiness Consultation for High-Risk Youth: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

The transition from high school to adulthood is challenging for many students, but particularly for students who hold membership in marginalized populations. College and career readiness (CCR) supports can help students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) and those who have had interactions with the juvenile justice (JJ) system to find postsecondary success in a variety of areas, including employment, independent living, postsecondary education, leisure/social activities, and self-advocacy. CCR-focused consultation in the schools is a natural vehicle for improving transition planning, intervention implementation, and professional collaborations. This theme issue showcases partnerships and provides resources for practitioners, educators, and decision makers regarding CCR consultation approaches for youth with IDD, EBD, and JJ interactions.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 December 2018

Accepted 30 December 2018

The transition from high school to adulthood is challenging for many students as they acclimate to new demands and levels of independence. These challenges are even greater for students who hold membership in marginalized populations. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and social, emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD) and those who have had interactions with the juvenile justice (JJ) system are rarely provided sufficient, explicit tools to find postsecondary success (Cavendish, 2014; Lipscomb et al., 2017). Furthermore, little research or federal guidance exists to aid school personnel in facilitating the transition process from secondary settings into the adult world of higher education, employment, and independent living. College and career readiness (CCR) supports can help youth prepare for life after secondary school in a variety of areas, including employment, independent living, postsecondary education, leisure/social activities, and self-advocacy. This theme issue highlights CCR consultation practices to improve transition outcomes for students from targeted, marginalized populations. Consultation in the schools is a natural

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vehicle for improving transition planning, intervention implementation, and professional collaborations. For this reason, the articles selected for this special issue provide resources to educational decision makers to increase their capacity to support all students. We are dedicated to research promoting successful transition for students who are least likely to receive sufficient supports in this area.

When selecting articles for this theme issue, we sought those that embraced CCR as a collaborative and multidisciplinary consultation approach to deploying student supports. Accordingly, the purpose of this issue is to highlight partnerships and strategies that promote CCR consultation approaches for youth with IDD, EBD, and JJ interactions. It was our goal to begin the process of breaking down silos found in educational systems through increased consultative practices in a new topic area (i.e., CCR). This theme issue is intended to be a resource for practitioners, educators, and decision makers, encouraging interactions and dialogs around CCR for youth at highest risk for poor transition outcomes.

Harvey, Timmerman, and Vazquez (2018) provide a partnership perspective on providing CCR support for youth at high risk for underemployment in their article “College and Career Readiness Knowledge and Effectiveness: Findings from an Initial Inquiry in Indiana.” In this exploratory study, school personnel knowledge of CCR programs implemented in a midwestern state was investigated. The authors acknowledge that several CCR programs that focus on “college readiness” ignore the importance of the skills needed for successful college completion. The authors propose that this may have to do with the lack of knowledge surrounding the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) CCR indicators, skills needed for long-term success, and CCR programming available. Perceptions of CCR effectiveness from the perspective of teacher and guidance counselors are reported. At the close of this article, specific recommendations for supporting students with disabilities, including consultation and collaborative strategies, through CCR programs are provided.

The article “Preparing Juvenile Offenders for College and Career Readiness: A Cognitive Information Processing Approach” by Osborn and Belle (2018) offers an innovative approach to addressing the barriers faced by youth with JJ involvement attempting to transition to college and career. The authors review cognitive information processing (CIP), an evidence-based model of career development, as one method of CCR consultation. Using a case example, this article highlights the benefits and challenges of employing this strategy with JJ-involved youth and the positive implications for continued research into the use of evidence-based consultation models with this population.

In their article “Improving Family–School Collaboration in Transition Services for Students with Intellectual Disabilities: A Framework for School Psychologists,” Talapatra, Miller, and Schumacher-Martinez (2018) revisit

and refine the transition planning, implementation, and evaluation (TPIE) framework to better support students with IDD and their families through the CCR process. In this article, the TPIE model, which provides recommendations for school psychologists engaged in the cyclic stages for transition planning for students with IDD, is modified to include the critical role and voices of families during the transition process. This article uniquely aligns the work of school psychologists with the skills needed to promote optimal CCR for a population with historically poor postschool outcomes. The framework provided is the first structured approach to engaging school psychology professionals and parents for students with IDD as equal partners in the transition-planning process. Strategies for how to involve parents and caregivers across the three stages are offered, with specific attention given to the role of school psychologists in fostering the family–school partnership.

Knotek et al. (2018) submitted the article “An Implementation Coaching Framework to Support a CCR Program for Underserved First-Year College Students,” which examines CCR for first-generation university students and students of color enrolled in an undergraduate program; these two populations are considered to be most vulnerable for college incompleteness and often have significant social and emotional needs (Adams & Proctor, 2010; Petty, 2014). The SELF CARE resiliency program, a coaching-oriented social-emotional learning intervention, is aimed at closing the retention gap and providing CCR skills (e.g., self-management, growth mind-set, self-advocacy, and self-determination) to students during the first year of college. This intervention also addresses how to maximize protective and thriving skills by deciphering the culture and expectations of the university. The findings of this article suggest that utilizing SELF CARE and similar interventions can help provide vulnerable students the needed support to be successful in navigating the demands of attending a predominantly White institution.

Finally, in the commentary, Roach (2018), an expert in interventions for students with IDD, opens with case examples of students who are in need of transition support. Innovatively, Roach reframes this special issue from a lens of social justice. He calls upon the social justice framework to serve as a guide for the work that needs to be done to support students in CCR consultation. In discussing the works presented in each of the articles in this issue, Roach highlights points of discussion relevant to social justice and strategies novel to successful transition. His summarizations offer a comprehensive overview of the salient points of CCR consultation.

There has been increasing awareness of the need to intentionally prepare marginalized students for postsecondary opportunities. College and career consultation is a new arena for school psychologists to employ their knowledge, training, and skills in a meaningful way to impact long-term student success, an imperative of our national association guidelines. Despite increasing legislative

emphasis through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004; i.e., requirement of transition plans), Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008; i.e., easier access to higher education for students with disabilities), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014; i.e., one-stop shop for joining the workforce), and ESSA (2015; i.e., statewide CCR indicators as accountability measures), there has been very little writing regarding consultative practices for school personnel in implementing these mandates. We believe that CCR consultation is an increasingly imperative future avenue for school personnel to engage in if they are committed to improving outcomes for some of our most marginalized populations.

While collaborative practices are widely endorsed and considered a key contributor in positive outcomes for students with disabilities after high school, as noted in the preceding, there is limited research on collaborative CCR strategies between schools, communities, and service personnel. There are even fewer federal guidelines that exist to aid school personnel in facilitating the transition process. This issue highlights various approaches to working collaboratively within teams to address the specific needs of some of our most marginalized youth, including those with ID, EBD, and JJ interactions. The evidence-supported strategies, collaborative frameworks, and consultation interventions promote practical methods for successful transitions for specialized populations and provide positive structural supports to increase the capacity of those working with such populations. We are excited to offer initial research in this new consultative area through this special issue of the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* and present a theme issue that can serve as a resource to those involved in the care and education of students within these populations.

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