

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: TRANSITION OF STUDENTS FROM A  
SPECIAL CENTER TO SELF-CONTAINED  
CLASSES IN GENERAL EDUCATION  
SCHOOLS: PARTICIPANTS'  
EXPERIENCES

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The process of transferring disabled students from a special center to self-contained classes in regular schools was investigated through case study research. The purpose of the study was to determine how different participants experienced the transitions and how their roles affected their experiences. The experiences and perceptions of participants, specifically parents, teachers, and administrators were explored through qualitative methodology. The transitions of six students served as the focus of the case studies. Data was collected through three techniques, semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and review of archival information.

All participants reported that the opportunity to model appropriate social skills and behaviors were a benefit of the transition. Parental anxiety was reported to be a major barrier by school staff and parents. Parents perceived their role as the "decision maker" in the process. They were concerned about safety, ridicule by other students, and loss of a community of supportive parents. Having the child attend his or her home school was important to school personnel but not to parents.

Teachers at the special center based their decision to transfer a child on a match between the child's skills and the regular school's preparation and willingness to work with the child. Teachers at the receiving schools were concerned about their lack of skills to teach severely disabled students and lack of resources. Administrators perceived their role as one of leadership and setting the tone. They are not directly involved in the transition process unless difficulties arise.

The primary barrier in the transition process is the lack of a shared conceptualization regarding how best to deliver educational services. The factor expressed by all participants as most facilitative of

the process was open, honest, and frequent communications amongst participants. The transitions were reported as successful by the participants based on their subjective impressions. Success of the transitions was not evaluated or measured through traditional objective criteria because such measures were not available.

TRANSITION OF STUDENTS FROM A SPECIAL CENTER TO  
SELF-CONTAINED CLASSES IN GENERAL EDUCATION:  
PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES

by

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Rationale

The phenomena investigated in this study is the process of transferring students from an Intensity V placement to self-contained classes in general education schools. The research is a descriptive, exploratory study pursued in the tradition of qualitative methodology. Consistent with qualitative methodology and style, it was written in the first person (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Transferring students from highly restrictive to less restrictive educational placements is a problem that the Baltimore County Public School system faces on a daily basis. Baltimore County schools under the guidance of the former superintendent are attempting to develop an "inclusive school system" for all children with and without disabilities. One of the ways that this goal is being approached is by transferring students, determined as appropriate candidates, from special centers to self-contained classes in regular schools. For example, students previously educated in separate, special education centers would be

transferred to outreach classes or regular education classes with special education support in community schools.

The typical process of placement in special education is that a student experiences academic difficulties in regular education and is evaluated to determine if he or she has a disability. Once a disability is determined, a level of service is determined and possibly a change in placement is made depending on the case. Typically placement moves on a continuum from a less restrictive setting to a more restrictive setting.

The scenario at Battle Monument School is not typical. Many students have severe disabilities that were diagnosed at very young ages, sometimes at birth. These students often received early intervention services through the Baltimore County Infants and Toddlers program. They then entered special education at three years of age. As these children developed and received specialized interventions such as physical, occupational, and speech therapy services, many made progress in several areas. At some point teachers,

administrators, support personnel, and parents determined that these children no longer required the intensity V placement and considered transition to a less restrictive placement. Thus, they move in the opposite direction on the least restrictive continuum. A unique difference between the Battle Monument students and other special education students is that many of them have never been in less restrictive placements, let alone regular education classes.

Two different factors contribute to this phenomena. The diagnosis and treatment of students with special needs at younger ages created an opportunity for them to receive intervention in highly formative years of development (Rogers, 1986). The other factor is the overall philosophical shift in how these students should be served educationally. Challenges to segregated environments for special needs students was part of the mainstreaming movement.

Prior to the 1950's and 1960's, children with special needs were almost exclusively educated in separate facilities or separate classes (Messick, 1984). During the 1960's and 1970's, concerns regarding

segregation and discrimination of many groups of people became forefront in the social and political movements in the country (Messick, 1984). Research suggested that children with special needs did not necessarily show greater educational gains in a self-contained setting than they did if they were involved in the regular education setting with support (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980; Madden & Slavin, 1983). Thus, the concept of "mainstreaming" became prominent with the passage of P.L. 94-142. Mainstreaming is the idea that children with special needs receive educational support in the regular education setting to the maximum extent possible. Research began to focus on effective strategies to successfully mainstream students with disabilities (Biklen, 1985).

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) was a proposal that special education and regular education would operate more effectively to serve all students with educational needs if they were merged into one collaborating system (Will, 1986). Reform should occur at the building level or through local education agencies developing pilot programs that served special

needs children with mild and moderate disabilities in regular classroom settings with appropriate supports (Reynolds, Wang, & Wallberg, 1987).

The inclusion movement extended the idea of the regular education initiative to students with severe to profound disabilities. The basic proposition was that all students would receive educational services in the general education classroom with appropriate in-class support and community based instruction in normal community settings (NASBE, 1992). This represents a major philosophical shift in the conceptualization of how students with disabilities should be served as well as a restructuring of entire school systems (Sailor, 1991).

Such is the historical and social context into which the issues of transferring students to less restrictive placements fall. By examining the process of transferring students to less restrictive placements, I discovered the more subtle as well as obvious obstacles that prevent some transitions from being successful. I explored how the transition process occurs and provide recommendations about how it can be

improved upon in chapter four.

For purposes of this study, I am defining two terms, "mainstreaming conceptualization" and "inclusion conceptualization" in order to provide a framework of service delivery against which to understand the transition process in this study. A "mainstreaming conceptualization" refers to the idea that children are placed in a less restrictive educational environment to the extent to which they are able to participate and benefit. Thus, the child must demonstrate skills necessary to meet the demands of that environment. An "inclusion conceptualization" refers to the idea that the child should be placed in the regular education classroom, regardless of his or her skills, with supports and modifications to the environment to meet his or her needs. Further discussion of both concepts is continued in chapter two.

#### Qualitative Research in Education

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) discussed how qualitative methodology is used in applied research for education. Evaluation and policy research provides information regarding programs and policy decisions. The researcher

is typically hired by the agency to provide information which will in turn assist them with making decisions. Pedagogical research involves a practitioner using qualitative data collection and analysis to inform and improve his or her own work. Action research involves individuals using qualitative research to promote social change. Typically the information presented is used to influence a political process to be consistent with the advocate's beliefs. Bogdan and Biklen make the point that action research "relies on people's own words, both to understand a social problem and to convince others to help remedy it" (p.230). Thus, information and conclusions resulting from qualitative investigations can have a direct impact on the implementation of educational programs as well as providing insights into educational experiences.

In discussing research recommendations in the area of restructuring school systems to better serve children with severe disabilities, Giangreco and Putnam (1991) argue:

Validated systems-change strategies are needed to assist schools, districts, and regions in their

changeover from segregated models to integrated, full inclusion educational models. Special education research is historically rooted in educational psychology, a tradition that emphasizes the controlled experiment and intervention at the individual unit of analysis level. Ethnographic research paradigms and multivariate research technologies that allow for the documentation of multiple and unintended influences and effects must be expanded to evaluate systems-change efforts judged to show varying degrees of success. (p.264).

Qualitative Methodology for Investigating the Transition Process

While it is not necessary to justify qualitative research design as a methodology for educational research, it is appropriate to explain why a qualitative case study design was the most appropriate choice for the questions related to transition. First I will highlight the distinctions between the quantitative and qualitative or naturalistic paradigms.

Traditional quantitative research designs are based

on particular assumptions and methodologies. The researcher typically defines or identifies variables in terms of measurable, observable entities. These variables are then manipulated through experimental designs in order to accept or reject some apriori hypotheses which were generated based on theory.

Qualitative research, sometimes referred to as ethnographic research or naturalistic inquiry, is an attempt to discover and build analytic descriptions of a phenomena or processes through investigating the meaning of that phenomena for its participants. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) provided a description of the ethnographic research process:

First, strategies used elicit phenomenological data; they represent the world view of the participants being investigated, and participant constructs are used to structure the research. Second, ethnographic research strategies are empirical and naturalistic. Participant and nonparticipant observation are used to acquire firsthand, sensory accounts of phenomena as they occur in real world settings, and investigators

take care to avoid purposive manipulation of the variables. Third, ethnographic research is holistic, ethnographers seek to construct descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions, the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward, and belief about the phenomena. Finally, ethnography is multimodal or eclectic;

ethnographic researchers use a variety

of research techniques to amass their data (p.4).

Qualitative methodology provided the best way to study a process, such as the process of transition, in which there are multiple independent variables that are highly interrelated. One of my primary assumptions in conducting this research was that the success or failure of the transition process may be a function of the relationships among various participants who serve various functions and roles within that process. This also reflects my own philosophical orientation which is holistic, focusing on person-environment interactions. The assumptions of qualitative research, specifically

that it is a subjective, inductive, generative process, are the same assumptions from which I explored my research questions. My questions and assumptions were investigated as interwoven in the social and political context in which they exist.

Personal and Professional Philosophy, Bias, and Role

My knowledge, understanding, and perceptions about the mainstream/inclusion philosophy and thus transferring children into these placements initially came from an academic learning experience. I originally began researching the inclusion philosophy because of a dissertation idea I was pursuing in 1992. I began to read research and position papers challenging the traditional model of special education service delivery.

During my internship in 1993, in a small public school system outside of Erie, Pennsylvania I had direct experience with inclusion of a multi-handicapped high school student. The student suffered from cerebral palsy, moderate mental retardation, visual difficulties, speech difficulties, and both fine and gross motor difficulties. He currently attended his

home school which happened to house the functional class in which he was placed. His mother requested a change in his schedule from only participating in functional classes to part-time participation in the regular education classes with modifications. Her concern was that her son was not receiving well rounded exposure to academic subject material. The school system complied with her wishes and placed the student in biology, social studies, and ceramics classes with modifications in the curriculum, classwork, homework, and testing with opportunities for instructional support from the special education teacher.

My role in this process was to provide current information regarding the child's academic and information processing abilities through an updated assessment and to provide recommendations for modifications and supports necessary for the transition. The outlook I developed from this experience was that whether or not inclusion works is a function of the level of commitment of those involved in the inclusion process. School systems, administrators, and teachers that want to include a

disabled student in the educational mainstream will make it work if they want to, by continuing to provide the time, energy, and resources necessary until inclusion is deemed successful.

Whether or not school systems choose to include disabled children in regular education classes is based on numerous social, historical, political, and financial issues specific to that particular school system. My position is not that inclusion is necessarily a good or bad idea, but that effective inclusion requires the desire and commitment to make it effective. I continue to struggle with the notion that inclusion will be effective for all types of students and more specifically that assurance of effective inclusion is always an appropriate expenditure of school system resources.

My bias is that movement toward inclusive education is generally a positive move as long as there are sufficient resources to facilitate a successful experience. The questions I studied relate to how the various individuals involved in the transition process view a successful transition. I believe that most or

all participants would probably agree on a simplistic definition of a successful transition such as, evidence that the child can learn and behave appropriately in the new placement. However, a deeper question based on the reality of the situation is: "In order for that to happen, do some people have to take on additional burdens?" or "Can everyone's needs really be met in the transition?". A key question then becomes, "If everyone's needs cannot be met, is it (the transition) still defined as a success?".

The advantage of my position to study this issue was that as the school psychologist for Battle Monument I had opportunity to experience the transition firsthand. As part of my professional role I had legitimate access to the process, and thus could obtain information and observe situations that would not necessarily be accessible for someone outside the system. By working with the parents, teachers, and administrators on a frequent basis, I had an opportunity to build the rapport and trust necessary to gain cooperation and comfort to participate in this project.

However, my position also acted a double-edged sword. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) refer to this as conducting research in your own "backyard" and recommend against it. They state,

Previous experiences with settings or peoples can set up expectations for certain types of interactions that will constrain effective data collection. Remember that you already have a role in your personal or professional nonresearch capacity-whether as colleague, supervisor, or friend. In your research role, you will relate to known persons as your research 'others'. This switch may prove confusing to both parties. (p. 22).

Although, I agree with Glesne and Peshkin that in some or even many cases, the professional role one serves may act as a barrier to obtaining information, I believe that it may be a function of the role as well as how one handles the role and examines how that role affected the research. I will discuss my specific experiences in having dual psychologist/researcher role in chapter four and the implications as such. Many of

the issues I faced are concerns faced by ethnographic researchers who spend a long time in "the field" and become an intimate part of the community they investigate (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

#### Problem Statement, Research Questions, and Goals

Merriam (1988) categorized case study research problems into three types of problems. Conceptual problems are those in which two juxtaposed elements are conceptually or theoretically inconsistent. Action problems are those in which there is a conflict between alternatives with no clear choice for a course of action. Value problems are those in which undesirable consequences arise with regard to established patterns of class participation and interaction.

The problem of transferring students to less restrictive placements represents a conceptual problem. More specifically the problem is "How does the system provide services the child needs to help him or her be successful in a less restrictive placement, when the assumption was that in order to be served most effectively, the child required an Intensity V placement?" The larger systemic problem is that

different placements and different settings have inherent differences. "How do participants experience the transition of children to these inherently different settings?" "How does one's role in this process affect their experiences?" These are the research questions that guided this study. In order to accomplish this task, I had to explore and describe the experiences and perceptions of the participants during the transition. By accomplishing this I can develop a conceptualization of how the transition occurs in each case. Further issues to be discussed include "How do different experiences of participants affect the process?". "How will the information obtained contribute to the ongoing questions regarding service delivery in special education?".

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The first part of the literature review will examine the historical, social and legal influences on education and special education. The purpose is to provide a historical perspective of the evolution of special education service delivery, so that the reader understands how the current debate regarding educational placements developed. The progression of educational movements from mainstreaming to the regular education initiative to inclusion will be discussed. It is also necessary to describe the context of transferring students to less restrictive placements in regard to current social, legal, and educational philosophy.

I will demonstrate how the proposed research fits into the current scientific debate by first examining the research that investigates the integration of students with disabilities in regular classes and schools. Then I will examine the literature concerning transitions in education and the specific process of transferring students from one special education

placement to another. This information will provide support for the relevance of the questions "How do participants experience the process of transferring of a child from a more restrictive educational placement to a less restrictive placement?" and "How does one's role in this process affect their experiences". The literature specifically regarding these issues will examine what factors or related issues have already been addressed and what factors have not.

#### History of Social, Political, and Legal Influences on Special Education

Prior to the 1960's students with disabilities were educated, if at all, in separate schools, wings, or classes. They had minimal interactions with non-disabled peers. During the 1960's, in conjunction with the civil rights movement, this form of educational service delivery came to be viewed as segregationist. There was a growing awareness and discontent with the overrepresentation of minority students identified as educably mentally retarded and placed in separate classes (Kavale, 1979; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Messick, 1984).

Wolfensbersberger (1972) described what he called the principles of normalization for members of "deviant" groups, deviant defined as people whose behaviors or characteristics deviate in some way from the normative group, such as the mentally retarded. He defined "normalization" as "utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible, in order to establish and/or maintain personal behaviors and characteristics which are as culturally normative as possible." (p.28). His proposition was that society discriminates and unnecessarily segregates members of deviant groups, and then argues that it is for their benefit.

During the 1960's and 1970's educators began to question the assumption that children with disabilities in separate classes actually showed greater academic and social gains relative to their counterparts who participated in regular classes. At the same time, the lack of provisions for legal rights of special education students was challenged in the courtroom. Several pieces of federal legislation contributed to awareness and concern for protecting the rights of

students with disabilities.

P.L. 93-112, referred to as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, had a significant impact on the rights of disabled individuals. Section 504 reaffirmed all disabled childrens' right to a free and appropriate education as well as the opportunity to participate in services equal to those provided to other individuals which receive federal funds, such as employment and higher education (Davis, 1986).

The Education Amendments Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-380, 1974) established the goal of providing full educational opportunities to all disabled children with procedures to guarantee funding of this goal. It also established the provision of procedural safeguards regarding the non-discriminatory identification, evaluation, and placement of children with disabilities in special education (Davis, 1986).

In 1975 the most comprehensive piece of legislation regarding the education of handicapped children was passed overwhelmingly in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142, 1975) brought

the provisions of previous laws under one bill. The major provisions of P.L. 94-142 were (a) free and appropriate public education, (b) non-discriminatory assessment, (c) development of an individualized education plan (IEP), (d) due process, (e) privacy of records, (f) least restrictive environment, and (g) related services (Reynolds, Gutkin, Elliott, & Witt, 1984).

#### Mainstreaming

With the provisions in P.L. 94-142 that children should receive a "free and appropriate" education in the "least restrictive environment" possible, educators and researchers began to seriously investigate the effectiveness of self-contained special education placements for children. The "mainstreaming" movement asserted that children should be placed in regular classrooms to the extent to which they can benefit (Kavale, 1979).

By the early 1980's, a significant amount of research had been conducted attempting to determine the efficacy of special class placements versus regular class placements, primarily for mildly disabled

students (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980; Madden & Slavin, 1983; Pecke & Cooke, 1983). Carlberg and Kavale (1980) conducted a meta-analysis of fifty primary research studies that investigated the effectiveness of special versus regular class placement evaluating academic achievement and social factors as outcome variables. The meta-analysis allowed them to determine an effect size in order integrate findings from all the studies and subject them to reanalysis. Carlberg and Kavale indicated that simple review of the literature yielded inconclusive findings because the individual studies were fraught with methodological problems such as no treatment effect, insufficient power of statistical tests, and problems of internal validity. They found that special class placements were inferior to regular class placements for students with lower than average IQs, but special class placements were superior to regular class placements for behaviorally disordered, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled students.

All students investigated in all fifty studies had IQs of at least 50 (moderate range of mental retardation). Madden and Slavin (1983) also reviewed

the literature regarding academic and social outcomes for mildly disabled students in regular class placements, special class placements, and part-time resource room placements. They concluded that students identified as educably mentally retarded and learning disabled showed higher levels of academic achievement and social/emotional adjustment if individualized instruction was provided in mainstreamed classes than in self-contained classes. They discussed research on programmatic variables that enhanced the likelihood of successful mainstreaming and found positive effects for cooperative learning, social skills training, and various behavioral modification techniques.

Peck and Cooke (1983) reviewed research investigating the efficacy of mainstreaming young children with disabilities in early childhood programs. They included studies that mainstreamed children with severe multiple disabilities. They concluded that data failed to provide firm evidence regarding the superiority of either integrated programs or segregated programs due to methodological problems such as lack of random assignment and poor reliability and validity of

measures of early development. Pecke and Cooke stated that the future goal of research should not be to continue attempting to demonstrate the effectiveness of mainstream programs, but to examine factors which improve the quality of mainstreaming programs.

In closing, we assert that the principles which lie at the heart of the policy of mainstreaming were not created with the intention that their legitimacy rest on available empirical evidence. Rather, they represent a set of policy goals which educational research should be aimed at achieving. In short, the task of researchers vis a vis mainstreaming is not to prove, but to improve the quality of integrated programs (pg. 17).

Pecke and Cooke thus advocated the examination of qualitative research variables.

Indeed, without research directed toward assessing qualitative differences in integrated programs we may be doomed to make summative judgements based on primitive or mediocre attempts to implement mainstreaming

models (pg. 16).

Most of the research at that time examined the effectiveness of mainstreaming and not the effects of mainstreaming. The criteria for effectiveness was to determine to what degree integration of disabled students lead to an increase of disabled students emitting academic and social behaviors that approximate those of non-disabled students. Criteria of social and academic outcomes of mainstreaming were determined by the researchers prior to conducting research, and then the research was conducted to determine if these outcomes were achieved. Qualitative studies examine the effects that actually occur as a result of a process and then attempt to interpret these effects.

In Achieving the Complete School: Strategies for Effective Mainstreaming, Biklen (1985) explored the question of how to successfully mainstream students through two in-depth observational case studies. The first study consisted of examining twenty-five programs in one metropolitan area. The second study consisted of twenty-five programs throughout the country that supposedly effectively served severely and multiply

disabled students. The researchers conducted interviews with teachers, parents, administrators, and students as well as conducting thorough observations in the classrooms and the overall building facilities. The focus of the studies was on "specific strategies that people employ to promote successful integration." (p.ix).

According to Biklen (1985), one should not ask the question "Is integration a good idea?" for that is rather like asking the question "Was slavery a good idea". The demonstration by economists that emancipation would bring about economic difficulties in the South would not justify the continuance of slavery because it was a moral issue and not purely a scientific issue (p.2). Science alone cannot answer questions regarding mainstreaming because science can only provide facts about whether or not something happens under particular circumstances. Ethical and moral issues must also be considered in addition to factual information. Biklen maintains that mainstreaming for all students is a good idea because there are examples of successful integration of

students with even severe disabilities.

Biklen (1985) identified four models in which mainstreaming occurs. "Teacher deals" consist of individual teachers moving students into mainstream classes, generally without a specific program or policy from the system. "Islands in the mainstream" consist of situations in which special education programs are physically located in regular schools but are treated as separate from the mainstream of school life. "The dual system" is one in which intermediate units locate programs in regular schools, but the programs operate as educationally, psychologically, and administratively different from the regular school program.

"Unconditional mainstreaming" is the preferred program in which administrators, teachers, and parents combine to create a well planned and supported version of integration. Unconditional mainstreaming is most effective because all those involved support and participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of their programs.

Biklen's (1985) research identified several barriers to integration that would hinder successful

practice. These included (a) technological barriers such as curriculum, equipment, personnel; (b) attitudinal barriers such as societal discrimination against minority group members, severely disabled persons, and the stigma of certain conditions; (c) jurisdictional barriers between educational and other service systems; (d) administrative barriers in communication and coordination between regular and special education; (e) political barriers; (f) architectural barriers; (g) economic barriers; and (h) motivational barriers. In order to break down some of these barriers, it is necessary to change societal and educational perceptions, so that special education is entitled to the same rights and resources as regular education. It should not be viewed as a separate system that drains the resources of regular education.

Some practices which have led to effective mainstreaming programs included a) normalizing the daily routine for disabled students; b) using ordinary language rather than special education terms; c) continuity in location of a program from year to year; d) grouping students by age; e) having a natural

proportion of disabled students in regular classes; f) having functional programs and objectives built into the curriculum; g) charting progress; and h) delabeling activities so that special education labels are not associated with particular programs, such as the resource room.

Change, according to Biklen (1985), will only occur when societal and the educational systems commit to integrating individuals with disabilities through activism, rights, and equity and the belief that working with people with disabilities is valued as highly as educating those in the mainstream.

#### Regular Education Initiative

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) built upon the mainstreaming movement. Proponents of mainstreaming cited problems with two separate systems for education (i.e., regular education and special education) and called for the integration of the two systems into one, effective system which serves needs of all children whether they qualify for special education or not. Will (1986) addressed three criticisms with the current categorical system. First, all children do not receive

the support they need, particularly if they are not found eligible for special education. Second, placement in categorical programs and the stigma associated with it often results in lowered academic and social expectations for those youngsters. Finally, research failed to demonstrate conclusively that categorical, pull-out programs in special education show greater results in educating students with mild to moderate disabilities than educating those students in the mainstream with supports.

Will (1986) proposed that changes should occur at the building level and within local education agencies rather than through widespread national reform. Some of the proposed changes included the collective contributions of resources and skills to implement individual education plans; development of strategies designed to deliver interventions in regular classrooms; curriculum based assessment; and availability of services designed to meet individual student needs. Reynolds, Wang, and Wallberg (1987) proposed that the federal government should support states and local education agencies in authorizing and

supporting trial forms of integrated systems in which states would not lose funding typically secured through categorical delivery models. Trial programs would have to maintain accountability to students and parents.

However, as Davis (1989) suggested, the proposal to merge special and regular education was a debate in which regular educators, particularly at the local level, had limited participation.

The REI movement often is perceived as still another in a long line of top-down policy attempts to dictate and control program implementation. Many regular educators, already feeling overburdened and unfairly criticized for their perceived lack of response to more broadly based issues (e.g. rising illiteracy, increasing drop-outs rates, and declining student achievement test scores), view increased special education mandates as being especially intrusive and unrealistic (p. 442).

Davis also indicated the need for consumers (i.e., students and parents) to be a meaningful part of the REI discussion.

As long as the debate remained academic and did not involve participation of those who would be asked to implement trial programs, the value of such programs would be lost to frustration with making difficult changes, and it would simply be viewed as another educational/political bandwagon.

### Inclusion

Inclusion extended the REI position to children with severe disabilities, offering a reconceptualization of how all children should be served educationally. Basically all students would receive educational services in the general education classroom with appropriate in-class support and community based instruction in normal community settings (NASBE, 1992; Sailor, Gee, Goetz, & Graham, 1988). The premise is that the school environment should change and adapt to accommodate the student and not require the student to fit into a prescribed program. The emphasis is on a curriculum flexible enough to be modified for each student in order to address that student's needs. Thus, instruction becomes more student centered rather than teacher centered.

Other components of inclusion include: (a) zero rejection philosophy; (b) attendance at home school; (c) natural proportion of students with disabilities; (d) education placements that are age and grade appropriate; (e) emphasis on cooperative learning and peer instruction; and (f) special education supports provided in the general education classroom and not in pull-out programs or self-contained classrooms (Sailor, 1991). Inclusive schools are developing at several levels. Colorado, Iowa, and Vermont have made state commitments to restructure their systems to be more inclusive (NASBE, 1992). Inclusion also happens at the district level, as in Baltimore County, or even at a building level if the administrators choose to develop inclusive programs.

Sailor (1991) argues that the only way for inclusion to work is to restructure entire school systems. He described school restructuring as having at least three of four sets of operations. School organizational autonomy ultimately shifts the role of facilitator and assistance provider from the state to the school personnel, allowing them to serve in more

ways than keeping track of compliance issues. Site-based management and shared decision making allows teachers, administrators, staff, and parents to take responsibility for programmatic decisions and allocation of resources. Coordination of regular and special education resources reduces the categorical allocation, so resources can be used most effectively to meet the needs of all children. Finally, increased participation by community members and organizations promotes both financial and emotional support to schools, as communities recognize the stake they have in the education of their children. Giangreco and Putnam (1991) emphasize the importance of community involvement because severely disabled students have difficulty generalizing skills, and they need to learn skills in the community settings in which they will be used.

Some members of the educational and academic communities oppose full inclusion for all students, advocating the need for a continuum of placements (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Shanker, 1995). These authors maintain that placement of some children in regular

classes will prevent them from receiving the related services and individual attention that they need due to their disabilities. Fuchs and Fuchs (1995) reported that there are several organizations that publicly oppose the full inclusion movement including the American Council on the Blind, the Commission on the Education of the Deaf, the Council for Children with Behavior Disorders, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the Learning Disabilities Association.

Both Fuchs and Fuchs (1995) and Shanker (1995) took issue with the analogy of equating the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling and inclusion. The analogy equates the premise that separate education for minorities was inherently unequal and extends it to children with disabilities. Fuchs and Fuchs cited an argument made by Kauffman in 1989 regarding the segregation analogy:

Equating ethnic origin with disability is (1) demeaning to blacks who suffer discrimination simply because of the color of their skin, and (2) trivializes the needs of students with disabilities whose differences require

accommodations far more complex than any contemplated in this court ruling, which simply disallowed skin color as a criterion for access or opportunity (p.24).

However, proponents of inclusion, such as Biklen (1985) would argue that individuals with disabilities suffer discrimination and unequal access to opportunities simply as a result of societal bias.

#### Trends in Placement of Students with Severe Disabilities

Overall, current research indicates that there is a positive trend toward placing all students with disabilities in general education public schools. However, there are disparities among states and among disabilities categories indicating that children with severe disabilities have less opportunity to receive education in general education public schools (Daniel & Bellamy, 1988; Sawyer, McLaughlin, & Winglee, 1994).

Danielson and Bellamy (1988) investigated the extent to which students with disabilities are placed in general education public schools and how this varied across states. They examined data collected by the

Office of Special Education Programming (OSEP) which is mandated by section 618, part B, of P.L. 94-142 for the 1985-1986 school year.

Danielson and Bellamy (1988) found that nationwide, ninety-four percent of students with disabilities are served in general education public schools. However, there was significant variability state to state. The average state places nearly five times as many students in segregated settings when compared with the rates in the five states that have the lowest rates of placement in segregated settings (Oregon, Arkansas, Iowa, Hawaii, and Idaho). The six states that have the highest rate of placement in segregated facilities place students in segregated facilities five to six times the national average. These states are the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, New York, and Ohio.

Danielson and Bellamy (1988) stated in reviewing this data that there was no investigation into the reasons for the disparity or that these findings provide an indication of the quality of the special education services. In addition, there may be

inconsistency in data reporting from state to state depending on how terminology and instructions are interpreted.

Sawyer, McLaughlin, and Winglee (1994) also studied trends in the OSEP data regarding educational placement by disability category from 1977 to 1990. They found that students with more severe disabilities exhibited decreases of placements in general education public schools. Students with mental retardation showed a two percent decrease in general education placements. Students with multiple disabilities showed a six percent decrease in general education placements. Students with serious emotional disturbance showed a four percent decrease in general education placements. However, for those students with multiple disabilities, mental retardation, and other health impairments who are served in general education public schools, there were small percentage increases in service delivery provided primarily in regular education classrooms versus segregated classrooms.

One possible explanation the authors provided for the confusing findings regarding students with mental

retardation was that criteria for diagnosing mental retardation has become more stringent. Students must exhibit both intellectual limitation as well as adaptive behavior deficits. Many of the students previously classified as mentally retarded might now be identified as learning disabled or speech/language impaired. Thus, students identified with mental retardation may have more severe disabilities, and thus may present greater challenges to provide educational services in the regular education environment. However, if these students are served in general public schools, they are more likely to be served in regular classes than they were several years ago, due to mainstreaming initiatives.

#### Research Regarding the Effectiveness of Integrating Students with Severe Disabilities

The term inclusion generally means educational service delivery in which all children are receiving educational services in the regular classroom environment. Currently, many states, school districts, or school systems are in the process of developing inclusive schools. However, each system may be at one

of several places in that process. This presents a quandary for researchers because some programs that integrate students with severe disabilities may be at different points in that process, and thus would not be defined as inclusion. In addition, the terminology in the literature is confusing. Villa (1995) stated that he prefers using the term "heterogeneous" schools because inclusion implies that someone could be excluded. He also stated that the distinction between "inclusion" and "full inclusion" was not precise (R. Villa, personal communication, March 5, 1995). Therefore, in discussing research, I will use the terms integration of students with severe disabilities. Those studies that report examinations of inclusion programs will be identified as such.

Two meta-analyses (Baker, 1994; Wang & Baker, 1986) examined the academic effect size and the social effect size of special needs students in integrated versus non-integrated educational placements. Wang and Baker (1986) examined eleven studies performed from 1975 to 1984. The criteria for study selection included: (a) studies had to examine the impact of

integration on outcomes in the areas of performance, attitudes, or process with designs that compared segregated to integrated environments and used pre and post-analysis of program effects; (b) studies must have been published in a professional journal; and (c) studies must contain sufficient usable data for quantitative analysis. Fifty-three percent of the subjects compared were mentally retarded, three percent were learning disabled, nineteen percent were hearing impaired, and twenty-five percent were mixed categories of exceptionalities.

Wang and Baker (1986) found that the overall mean weighted effect size across all studies and all three categories was .33, indicating a positive effect for mainstreaming versus segregated placements. No significant effects were obtained for separate independent variables or clusters of independent variables such as student characteristics, research design, or approach to implementation. The authors concluded that future research should focus on program design components.

Baker (1994) examined thirteen studies performed

from 1983 to 1992. He found an academic effect size of 0.08 and a social effect size of 0.28. Baker's findings were reported in a review of meta-analysis (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1995) and are not currently published in any other form. Thus, no further information regarding the specifics of his study can be obtained. Results of both studies indicate that the effects of integration for disabled students, although small, are consistently positive.

Staub and Peck (1995) reviewed the research on outcomes for non-disabled students educated in integrated classrooms. They found no evidence of harmful effects on non-disabled students, such as reduction in academic progress, loss of teacher attention, or development of undesirable behaviors. In fact, benefits demonstrated for non-disabled students included: (a) reduced fear of human differences, (b) growth in social cognition, (c) improvements in self-concept, (d) development of personal principles, and (e) caring friendships. However, limitations of the current research are that the majority have been conducted at the early childhood level and not the

primary or secondary grades. Second, most of the research utilized descriptive or quasi-experimental techniques, so these findings must not be interpreted as conclusive.

Research on Effective Instructional Techniques for Integrating Students with Severe Disabilities

Proponents of inclusive schools assert that research determining how to effectively facilitate the integration of students with disabilities is as important as whether or not integration currently demonstrates positive outcomes. Researchers began investigating techniques, program factors, instructional modifications, and supports that improve social interaction and increase academic outcomes.

Johnson and Johnson (1981) demonstrated that disabled and non-disabled students interacted more often in both positive and negative ways in a cooperative learning activity than students in an individual activity. The increased interactions generalized to non-instructional free time and higher nominations of peer acceptance. Slavin, Madden, and Leavy (1984) extended Johnson and Johnson's work and

demonstrated the effectiveness of an approach combining individualized instruction and cooperative strategies. The Team Assisted Instruction approach facilitated social acceptance of disabled students and increased their academic achievement.

Other techniques essential to effective integration include collaborative teaching and adaptive instruction (Thousand & Villa, 1992; Wang, 1989). Collaborative teaching and problem solving allows educational personnel with a variety of skills to generate solutions to problems, make decisions, and develop new ways to teach heterogeneous groups of students (Thousand & Villa, 1992). Adaptive instruction is a systematic process of making instructional accommodations to meet the needs of diverse learners. Adaptive instruction incorporates various instructional strategies that have been demonstrated to show positive effects on student learning. These strategies include mastery learning, individual tutorials, large and small group instruction, and direct instruction (Wang, 1989). Adaptive instruction offers a comprehensive, systematic method of assessing student needs and learning

characteristics, planning curriculum and instructional modifications, determining student outcomes, and assessing achievement of student outcomes.

Research on Effects of Integration of Students with Severe Disabilities

Recent ethnographic and qualitative studies have investigated the effects of inclusion of severely disabled students into general education on educational staff (Giangreco, et. al., 1993; Stainback, et. al., 1992). Both studies found that placement of students with disabilities into general education classrooms evoked fear and anxiety in the teachers and non-disabled students. Teachers needed support in adapting the curriculum and dealing with behavior difficulties. However, as the year progressed, feelings of fear and anxiety were replaced by feelings of acceptance and ownership of the disabled students. Giangreco, et. al referred to this as a "transformation".

Stainback, et. al. (1992) conducted an ethnographic study on the effects of placing seven students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. All disabled students attended a school

with 450 students in a midwestern city. The chronological age of the students ranged from 5 to 12. The seven students with disabilities were all identified as having severe or profound mental disabilities in addition to other disabilities such as syndromes, sensory difficulties, behavior difficulties, speech/language difficulties, or physical disabilities. Data collection techniques included interviews, extensive observations, and review of archival data. Data was collected by the support facilitator, a doctoral student, and twenty practicum students over a nine month period. Interviews were conducted with the six classroom teachers who taught the disabled students, the special education support facilitator, the principal, and non-disabled students.

The major finding of the study was that integration of students with disabilities initially evoked fear in classroom teachers at the beginning of the year. Teachers reported behavior problems to be the greatest area of difficulty. However, teachers reported they successfully engaged in collaboration with educational staff and utilized available supports to

help them develop behavior management strategies and adapt the curriculum. By the end of the year, teachers reported a decrease in behavior problems and feelings of greater comfort integrating students with disabilities.

Disagreement was reported regarding the effects that having a disabled student in the class had on non-disabled students. Non-disabled students generally reported that they benefitted from having a disabled student in their class. They enjoyed helping the disabled students. The parents of non-disabled students reported a mixture of perceptions regarding how much the teacher attended to the disabled student or thought the disabled student was a distraction. Some parents of non-disabled students felt their children were receiving less teacher attention while other parents felt it was valuable for their children to learn to accept students with disabilities. Additional findings reported by the authors included the perception by participants that students with disabilities made progress toward achieving IEP goals. No other specific data regarding these findings was reported.

Giangreco, et. al. (1993) investigated the experiences and perceptions of nineteen general education teachers who worked in ten public schools in Vermont. At some time in the last three years these teachers had students who had "dual sensory impairments" in addition to severe cognitive impairments. A semi-structured interview was conducted, asking questions regarding teachers' perceptions and experiences about having a student with severe disabilities in their class. A survey was conducted following the interviews as an alternative method for determining teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of disabled students.

Teachers revealed that they made the choice to have a disabled student placed in their class. These placements were contingent upon support availability and the option to change the child's placement if necessary. Most teachers reported they initially reacted to the student in a cautious or negative manner. In order to ease the teachers' fears, one role established for them was that of "host". Someone else had primary responsibility for the child's education.

One effect of this role was that teachers did not feel a sense of ownership of the disabled child the way they did for other students.

However, by the end of the school year, seventeen of the nineteen teachers reported increased feelings of ownership and involvement with the disabled student. The authors referred to this as a transformation. Initial fearful reactions transformed into positive reactions towards the end of the experience. The transformation process happened gradually as teachers began to view the child as a person rather than a disability. Another important finding of this study was that disability specialists (i.e., therapists, reading specialists, etc.) were perceived as helpful if their suggestions and delivery of services took into consideration the context of the general education class. What was unhelpful to teachers were the disruptions to class routines and the separate goals sought by specialists.

Kaskinen-Chapman (1992) investigated the impact of integration of students with severe disabilities in a school district serving over 3,000 students. Eleven

students, who had previously attended regional classes for students with special needs, returned to their home school over a two year period. As part of a program evaluation to determine the impact of the integration program, Kaskinen-Chapman investigated the attainment of IEP goals by students who returned to their home school, achievement of general education classmates, perceptions of general education classmates, attitudes of general education teachers, impact on teachers' instructional style and classroom structure, and satisfaction of parents of special needs students.

Kaskinen-Chapman (1992) determined the percentages of IEP goals attained by the end of the 1990-1991 school year. Percentages ranged from forty-three percent by an elementary age student who was severely mentally impaired to ninety-three percent attainment by a middle school age student who was physically impaired. No pre and post integration comparisons regarding attainment of IEP goals was conducted. Achievement of general education classmates was evaluated by comparing heterogeneous classrooms to classes without students with disabilities on

standardized test scores. The Gates-MacGinitie Test was utilized for first grade students, and the California Achievement Test was utilized for the second grade and above. One heterogeneous fifth grade class scored significantly higher than a non-integrated class ( $p < .001$ ). All other comparisons were not significant, indicating that integrating students with disabilities does not negatively affect the achievement of non-disabled students.

Other findings reported by Kaskinen-Chapman (1992) were that general education students were accepting of students with disabilities after two years of integration. Seventy-two percent of students surveyed reported that they would have a student with mental disabilities as a friend, demonstrating an increase from sixty-seven percent the previous year. The majority of general education teachers surveyed, by the end of the first year, felt students with disabilities benefitted from integrated experiences. Teachers who expressed the most favorable attitudes were those who were directly involved with implementation of integration experiences. Some of the most interesting

findings of Kaskinen-Chapman's study were the reasons why parents of special needs students chose to participate in a heterogeneous program. The reasons included increased opportunity for child's skill development, opportunities to be with peers without disabilities, proximity to home, feeling it was the right thing to do, opportunity to attend same school as siblings, and opportunity to ride the same bus as siblings. Overall, parents of special needs students expressed satisfaction with heterogeneous classrooms, and they felt their children made academic and social gains that would not have been achieved in a segregated setting.

#### Summary

Research indicates that integration of students with severe disabilities in classes with regular education peers yields small positive effects on social and academic outcomes for students with severe disabilities (Baker, 1994; Kaskinen-Chapman, 1992; Wang & Baker, 1986). Other studies have demonstrated positive reactions, indicated by self-report, for general education teachers (Giangreco, et. al., 1993),

non-disabled students (Stainback, et. al. 1992), and parents of special needs students (Kapinen-Chapman, 1992). Both positive and negative feelings were expressed by parents of non-disabled students (Stainback,et. al., 1992).

The hallmark characteristic of inclusive programs is that students with disabilities would continue to receive all required supports, equipment, adaptations, and related services in an integrated fashion in the regular classroom. The research examining methods of adapting curriculum and instructional techniques has demonstrated positive effects for cooperative learning strategies, adaptive instructions, and collaborative teaming amongst educational personnel.

Despite all the positive effects of integration, the research has not addressed concerns regarding cost expenditures for restructuring education systems and providing inclusive classes. Proponents of inclusion argue that the restructuring actually reduces costs by maximally combining and utilizing resources even when supports are provided to students with disabilities (Sawyer, McLaughlin, & Winglee, 1994). Opponents of

inclusion fear that systems will use inclusion as an excuse to place children with disabilities in regular education classes without providing the necessary supports, thereby reducing costs incurred by expensive separate special education facilities (Shanker, 1995).

Thus, as states, local education agencies, and communities begin to experiment with new programs and restructure old systems towards a less restrictive, more inclusive model, the children, parents, and staff experience the immediate consequences of implementation attempts at changing the system. The proposed research will examine arguably one of the most important components of that process, the transition of children from a special center to less restrictive placements in regular education settings.

#### Transition Process in General Education and Special Education

The word "transition" is defined as "passage from one position, state, stage, or subject to another" (The Random House Dictionary, 1978). Transitions refer to many concepts and contexts when discussing education and special education. Transition in the general

education context often refers to the movement of students from one grade to another such as second to third grade, from one level of school to another such as elementary to middle school, or from one benchmark phase of life to another such as the transition from high school to post-secondary education or vocational life (Pautler, 1994; Smith, 1991; Terenzini, 1993).

Using transition to refer to the movement from formal, public education to post-secondary education or working life is a frequent usage in special education literature (Evelo & Price, 1991; Horrocks, 1991; Knox & Parmenter, 1990; Pautler, 1994). The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services developed a position paper proposing a conceptual framework of the transition process from high school to formal employment (Will, 1984). Individuals involved in this process will also use the terms "transition plan" or "transition services" referring to the tasks and services necessary to ensure successful movement into adult life.

Since the passage of Public Law 99-457 (1986), which provides educational services to children with

disabilities from birth through age 3, other uses of the terms transition or transition process have been used to describe the time when preschoolers with disabilities enter special education typically transferring from infant and toddlers programs. (Fowler, Schwartz, & Atwater, 1991; Lazarri, & Kilgo, 1989; McDonald, et. al. 1989). While there are some common issues between the transition of young children into preschool programs, and the transition of children to less restrictive placements, there are also important differences.

Young children with disabilities are entering the education system for the first time. At this point, service delivery shifts from focusing on the needs of the entire family to the needs of the individual child. Services that may have previously been provided in the home are now provided in programs and classes with the primary goal of positively affecting the child's education.

The transition of students with disabilities from special centers to regular schools represents: (a) significant improvement in the child's development

warranting a less restrictive placement than was once the case; and/or (b) a shift in service delivery options from a model of segregating students with disabilities to a model of integration with peers in a regular school environment. At one time, either because of lack of available options or current educational philosophy and policy, it was believed that these students required placement in special centers in order to meet their individual needs. The idea of moving these children to different programs with different positive and negative attributes presents an element of risk for all of those involved. The children leave a familiar environment where parents and staff know what to expect, and go to an unfamiliar environment where no one knows what the effects will be.

Schattman (1992) described the transition planning developed for a five year old student with physical, intellectual, and sensory difficulties. The student was transferred from an institution, where she lived and was educated, to a regular class placement at her home school. An "integration/support facilitator" provided

case management services to coordinate the needs of the family, school system, and previously attended residential program.

Schattman (1992) listed the transition planning activities developed for the child's return. Stage one involved identifying key personnel such as transition planning team members, home school teacher, and support personnel needed in home school class. Stage two involved becoming acquainted with the child by visiting her in the residential setting, reviewing medical and therapy records, and talking with residential staff. Stage three involved developing educational goals with input from the parents. Stage four involved identifying support needs such as staff training, additional materials, and community support services. Stage five involved developing a daily schedule such as finalizing the IEP and incorporating the IEP objectives into the class schedule. Stage six involved preparation for the first day, such as arranging resources, providing information to students in the class, and setting up peer supports. Stage seven involved establishing a support team with core and extended team members,

regular meeting times, and training needs to address the specific needs of this student. Schattman concluded that team collaboration was one of the most important components contributing to the success of the transition because it created an atmosphere of problem solving and trouble shooting against any obstacle.

Laughlin (1994) conducted an ethnographic study of the transition process of physically disabled students who were transferred from self-contained classes to regular education classes in their home schools. The author's descriptions discussed the transition process, interventions, and policies rather than individual students or cases. She found that there was a lack of open communication and bilateral support from both special education and regular education teachers for inclusion. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion had an effect on how much they extended themselves to help the disabled students in their classrooms.

Laughlin's study also focused on interventions developed to address areas of concern and the evaluation of those interventions. They included interschool visitations, videotaping the child in

therapy sessions, collaboration meetings, and inservices on inclusion and children with special needs. She found that the interventions alleviated some of the initial anxiety reported by parents, teachers, and administrators, but they did not affect teacher attitudes about inclusion.

Only one study, Hanline and Halvorsen (1989), examined parent perceptions of the integration transition process, referring to transition process in the same way it is conceptualized in this study. Parents from thirteen families with children ranging in age from four to twenty-one were interviewed regarding the support they received during the transition, their concerns, their involvement, and the effects of integration and the students' educational placements. Fourteen students were represented, eleven of which were determined by the school district to have severe disabilities. Hanline and Halvorsen reported that all of the students moved from a segregated education setting to an integrated, age-appropriate regular education school "at some point in their education," but they did not clarify whether that was the case

during the period of the study. In terms of the catalyst for transition, five families were part of a districtwide program, and seven families functioned as the "prime advocate" for the transition.

Several findings emerged from Hanline and Halvorsen's (1989) study. Parents identified family members as their primary means of support while some had supportive contacts with educators and community advocacy groups. Parent involvement was characterized by providing disability awareness programs for non-disabled peers, served on policy making boards, participated in inservice training, and organized support groups. Parents who had served as the prime advocates expressed the least satisfaction because they felt they had to take an uncomfortable role of being a "pain in the neck" and "fighting for what we want."

Parents identified six pretransition concerns. They were concerned about their child's physical safety in the regular education environment, more specifically related to accidents than intentional wrongdoing. They expressed concerns that their child would be rejected,

patronized, or babied by the staff and other students. Parents feared the loss of a totally accepting environment in which their child had greater access to related services than might be provided in an integrated setting. They also expressed concerns about transportation issues, the potential for the child's failure, and the district's ongoing commitment to this form of service delivery.

However, parents reported several positive effects of integration. They observed that their disabled children increased their social skills and appeared to have improved self-esteem. Parents themselves reported that they raised their expectations of their child and felt they were less likely to overprotect their child. Several parents also commented that seeing their child in an environment that brought less attention to disabilities diverted their focus away from the child's disability. It allowed them to view their child "from a less emotional standpoint."

Hanline and Halvorsen (1989) recommended four strategies that districts or schools could employ to constructively address parents' concerns regarding

transition to integrated settings. Transitions and integration should be systematically planned with parent participation on planning teams. Issues to be addressed included site selection and preparation, delivery of related services, staff development, and emergency procedures. The authors believed this would alleviate some of the parents' concerns regarding district commitment, safety, transportation, and delivery of related services. The other recommendations include opportunities for parents to visit and observe programs, talking to other parents who have experienced the transition, and facilitating ongoing communication between parents and staff.

No studies have focused on issues related to the sending school staff and the roles they play in the transition process. This research expands the findings of Hanline and Halvorsen (1989) by examining experiences and perceptions of other participants, specifically sending teachers and receiving teachers. This allows for examination of the different perceptions and reactions amongst participants as a function of their roles and how these differences

affect their interactions. It also investigated how the "transition process" occurred in various cases and what that impact had on the perceived success or failure of the transition.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The research is conceptualized as descriptive, exploratory, case study research utilizing qualitative methodology. Lancy (1993) cited seven general attributes of case study research:

1. Case studies use methodology associated with qualitative research such as ethnography.
2. Questions or issues are often at least partly predetermined.
3. Audience is a well defined client group more likely to be those in authority, such as school boards and administrators.
4. Presentation of results may be accomplished effectively through oral as well as written work.
5. Case studies are often under contract and thus motives may be pecuniary rather than quest for knowledge for its own sake.
6. Typically the researcher takes an evaluative stance comparing what is observed with some standard.

7. The researcher is obligated to draw pointed conclusions from the case study, explicitly or implicitly making recommendations that will alter policy and/or practice (p.142 - 143).

This research contains some of Lancy's attributes in that it utilizes some predetermined questions, qualitative methodology, and is developed to provide conclusions and recommendations for those who implement transitions in the school system. One major difference is that as the researcher, I did not evaluate the effectiveness of these transitions compared with some standard for summative evaluation purposes. The cases explored are highly unique and no satisfactory standard against which to compare has been established at this time. The research is useful for purposes of formative evaluation while the transition process is still being modified, thus allowing for recommendations to be implemented.

#### Participant Selection

The participants in the study included the six parents, eleven instructional personnel, four administrators, and five support personnel involved

with children who are transferring from Battle Monument School to self-contained classes in regular schools. The individual child served as the subject or focus of each case study. Participation was selected based on those students who were identified by Battle Monument School staff as candidates for transition, and whose parents agreed to participate in the study.

Fourteen students were transferred from Battle Monument School to outreach classes from Spring 1995 to Fall 1995. Of the fourteen students, three students upon re-evaluation were determined to be functioning in the borderline to low average range of intelligence. These students were considered to have been inappropriately placed at Battle Monument. They were not considered appropriate candidates for the study because they did not fit the criteria of having either mental retardation or multiple disabilities, which are the populations Battle Monument was intended to serve.

Of the remaining eleven students, five were not selected to participate in the study due to parental lack of availability or willingness to participate. One parent directly declined to participate in the study.

The other four parents did not attend any meetings or desire to participate in the process, even though they gave their approval for the change in placement. Two of these parents could not be reached by telephone and did not visit the school on any regular basis. Parental participation in the process was considered essential to what the research was attempting to study and required at least two, half-hour to hour-long interview sessions. Thus, parents who could not be contacted were not selected as candidates for the study.

The limitation that this presents for the study is that only the views and experiences of parents who are actively involved in the decision making and transition process are reflected. The parents who were not asked to participate were less involved in the transition process, which is the only identifiable difference between those asked to participate and those who were not. This issue is discussed further in the limitation section.

Six children, three girls and three boys were selected as the transition cases for the study. Four of the children transferred to elementary schools, one to

a middle school, and one to a high school program. All of the children were Caucasian and from lower to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Four of the six children were from single parent families. All children were diagnosed with some degree of mental retardation as well as other sensory, medical, and or physical difficulties. Each child's disabilities, history, and transition are discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

#### Description of setting

I made the choice to thoroughly describe Battle Monument and the students who attend, in order to provide some indication of the needs and disabilities of the entire student body. Each case will be described thoroughly to illustrate the needs and issues specific to that child. Consent was obtained from the parents of the child regarding agreement to be interviewed and to allow information about their child to be used in the study. Consent was also obtained from each staff member who participated in the interviews.

#### Battle Monument School

Battle Monument School is an Intensity V, special

school placement in the southeast area of Baltimore County. Intensity V is defined as

"intensive special education instruction and related services provided in a comprehensive special education setting for all or most of the school day. Special school, wing, or class in a general education facility." (COMAR,207.5 ).

Students attending Battle Monument School live in the southeast and part of the northeast area of Baltimore county. The school serves children from age 3 to 21. The disability conditions of the majority of students are mental retardation and multiply handicapped. Table 1 presents the specific numbers of cases of each disability condition represented. Many of the students who are mentally retarded and multiply handicapped have intelligence scores falling in the moderate to profound range of retardation. Table 2 displays the ranges of mental retardation for the students on which information was available. A portion of the younger students have not been officially determined to have mental retardation because Baltimore County policy does not officially identify mental

retardation until the child is six years of age.

The students have a variety of disabilities occurring in a variety of combinations. Areas of disabilities include cognitive/intellectual deficits, sensory deficits, physical impairments, language/communication impairments, as well as rare and complicated medical conditions.

The structure of the program is that class sizes generally consist of 6 to 10 children although some classes, such as the 3 and 4 year old classes, have fewer than 6 children. All classes have a certified special education teacher and an instructional assistant. In addition, some classes also have paid parent helpers to assist with management of the students. All classes are grouped by chronological age of the child and not by disability. The school programming is subdivided into four teams (pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school).

A unique feature of Battle Monument is that all teachers are encouraged to develop a program with other local schools that allow Battle Monument students to participate in an activity at least once a week with

non-disabled peers. For example, the Battle Monument middle school students go to General John Stricker Middle School for lunch and recess with students from that school. Similar programs are developed for the pre-kindergarten, elementary, and high school students. Students receive intensive levels of therapy services including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech/language therapy in the classroom as well as in pull-out programs. Table 3 displays the therapy caseloads at Battle Monument.

Table 1

Number of Students in Each Disability Category


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<u>Disability Category</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
Intellectual Limitation	52
Multiple Handicapped	42
Other Health Impaired	5
Speech/Language Impaired	4
Autism	2
Traumatic Brain Injury	2
Orthopedic Handicapped	1

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Note. Numbers are based on the population of students as of November, 1994.

Table 2

Levels of Mental Retardation for Students

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<u>Mental Retardation Classification</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
Borderline to Low Average	5
Mild	15
Moderate	24
Severe	23
Profound	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>

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Note. Numbers are based on population of students as of November, 1994.

Table 3  
Caseload of Related Services

<u>Therapy Services</u>	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Indirect</u>
Physical Therapy	18	21
Occupational Therapy	44	14
Speech/Language Therapy	76	5

Note. Numbers are based on population of students as of November, 1994.

### Pilot Study

There were two purposes for conducting the pilot study prior to the primary study: a) exploration of methodology; and b) to explore preliminary findings in order to guide the primary study. The first purpose was to explore data collection and analysis methods to determine feasibility, acceptance, appropriateness, and address problems with implementation. The observation summary sheet and archival data summary sheets were developed during the pilot study as a way of organizing the information in ways that were pertinent to the research questions. They were particularly useful in triangulating information and providing descriptive information regarding participants and programs.

The second purpose for conducting a pilot study was to obtain preliminary results in order to inform the primary study by establishing themes, issues, and questions to guide further data collection and analysis. This was particularly important in this study since the original research questions were broad and exploratory. Qualitative research is a dynamic process

of moving forward and backward amongst the theoretical framework, data collection, data analysis, and interpretations. The researcher constantly adjusts his or her techniques, questions, and perspectives depending on what new information and interpretations are discovered. Often it is at the end of the study that the researcher knows what the real questions are. Thus, conducting the pilot provided me with themes and issues which raised questions against which the data of the current study was compared.

The pilot study case involved a seven year old boy with autism and mental retardation. He was transferred from Battle Monument School to a program in a regular school, specifically designed to meet the instructional needs of autistic children. In this case, a newly developing program searched for appropriate candidates at the same time the child's mother was dissatisfied with the type of programming provided in the current placement. The entire transition was coordinated by a person whose job is to identify candidates and facilitate the process.

This transition served as the pilot study case, so

it was not one of the cases analyzed in the current study. Interviews were conducted with the child's mother, before and after the transition, the sending teacher and instructional assistant, the receiving teacher, the sending principal, the sending speech therapist, and the receiving principal. The student was observed in both the Battle Monument class and in the outreach class.

#### Procedures

The following procedures were utilized to conduct the study. First, the child was identified by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) team as an appropriate candidate for transition. It is important to recognize that the decision to transfer a child is completely independent of the research study. Once the decision was made to begin the transition process, the child's parent or guardian was solicited for participation, and her written consent was obtained (Appendix A). Once parent permission was obtained, the child's teacher was notified, requested to participate in the interviews, and asked to grant me permission to observe the child in class. Interviews were scheduled

with the parent, teacher, and appropriate staff. The purpose of the study, procedures, risks and benefits were discussed with the staff prior to beginning the interview. Staff members were apprised that their participation was completely voluntary and of their right to withdraw. At that time, staff consent was officially obtained in writing (Appendix B). Sending staff and parent pre-transition interviews were conducted from May 1995 through August 1995.

After the child had been in the new placement for at least two weeks, a contact person at the receiving school was contacted and the details of the study were provided. In some cases the administrators or teachers requested that I provide a letter describing the study (Appendix C) and copies of the parent permission. Once this information was provided, I made arrangements with each teacher to visit his or her class for the observation and interview the teacher. Interviews and observations with teachers and receiving school staff were conducted in September, 1995. Post-transition interviews with parents were conducted in October, 1995.

One suggestion from the dissertation committee was to examine my dual roles as a psychologist participating in the process as well the individual conducting the research. In order to accomplish this, Dr. William Strein interviewed me first in my role as the psychologist prior to conducting data collection, and he interviewed me a second time, as the researcher, at the end of the data collection. The first interview was conducted in May, 1995, and my final interview with Dr. Strein was in November, 1995.

#### Data Collection Techniques

Three data collection techniques were used for the research project: a) semi-structured interviews; b) participant-observation; and c) review of archival data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key selected participants in the transition process. Less structured interviews allow access to the perspective of the persons being interviewed and do not put categories into their minds (Merriam, 1988). For the purposes of this study, "sending" referred to school personnel at Battle Monument. "Receiving" referred to school personnel at the less restrictive

placements to which the child was transferred.

Interviews were conducted with six teachers at the sending school and four teachers at the receiving school. One teacher gave two interviews because there were two study participants in her class. At one school the staff did not agree to participate in formal interviews, but they allowed me to observe, ask questions, and attend a sixty day review meeting of this child's placement.

Two administrators from the sending school and two administrators at the receiving schools agreed to be interviewed. Questions for their interviews differed from the interview schedules used with parents, teachers, and support personnel because in their roles administrators are less intimately involved with the issues of each case. However, they provided a broader perspective of the process. The interview schedules were modified such that only those questions regarding the transition process, positive and negative factors regarding placement, and their roles were asked.

Five support personnel, not including myself, participated in the interviews. Those individuals

included two speech therapists from the sending school, the guidance counselor at the sending school, a guidance counselor at one of the receiving schools, and a school nurse that serves as a resource for the schools in the southeast area of Baltimore county.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the feelings and perceptions of the participants at the point in time that they were involved in the transition. Interviews with sending school personnel occurred in May and June, 1995, within two months prior to the change in placement and utilized the pre-transition interview schedule (appendix D). Interviews with receiving personnel occurred in September, 1995, at least two weeks after the change in placement and utilized the post-transition interview schedule (appendix E). Parents were interviewed both before and after the change in placement since they remained constant participants throughout the process. All interviews, but one, were audiotaped and then transcribed for accurate recording. All interviews with Baltimore County Public School employees were conducted at either Battle Monument School or the receiving

school. Parents were interviewed in their homes. Two questions were added during the interview process, one attempting to determine participants' understanding of the systemic issues that related to the child's change in placement. The question was, "What is your understanding of why Baltimore County is making the changes in special education?". Another question that arose during data collection and was asked informally regarded the importance of the child attending his or her home school in examining placement options.

The second technique utilized was participant-observations. Observations were recorded with field notes and then analyzed on the Observation Summary Sheet (appendix F). The Observation Summary Sheet was developed during the pilot study in order to organize the information. It is based on a method of data analysis described by Miles and Huberman (1994) called a contact summary form. Each child was observed in both the sending school program and the receiving school program, yielding a total of twelve observations. Mean length of classroom observations was 2 hours and 3 minutes. Observations were also recorded during ARD

meetings and transition meetings in which program options were discussed, one post-placement meeting at the receiving school, and informal meetings between teachers. The observations served as a way to obtain some information about how the child reacted to the transition and new placement. Because of the severity of the childrens' disabilities and their difficulty responding to questions, I did not feel that interviewing the children directly would provide useful information.

The third technique used to collect data was the examination of archival (document) data. Documents reviewed included: a) review of child's educational record; b) Least Restrictive Environment form which documents whether or not the child's needs could be addressed in a less restrictive placement by asking a series of questions; c) Individual Education Plans (IEPs); d) ARD minutes; and e) review of the transition document developed by Site-Based Management Team at Battle Monument School in 1993. An Archival Information Sheet (Appendix G) was developed during the pilot for the purposes of structuring, organizing, and

descriptively coding the information as it related to the study questions.

The extent of the study was limited to primary issues and research questions regarding the transition of six Battle Monument students to self-contained classes in regular schools. These students served as representatives of students in an intensity V special center for mentally retarded and multiply disabled students. The issues addressed were the perceptions and experiences held by various participants during the transition process and how their roles affected their experiences. Thus, this study did not address students from other schools or students who transferred from Battle Monument school in previous years. All transitions studied occurred from May through October, 1995. Since the focus of the study was on the transition process and not evaluating the effectiveness of each transition, data collection was confined within those six months.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques for the main study were those used in the pilot study and described by Bogdan

and Biklen (1992). The pilot study data, i.e., transcripts and field notes were reviewed and all words, phrases, events, and thoughts of the subjects were written down for the coding scheme. In describing what is meant by coding, Bogdan and Biklen stated "They are a means of sorting descriptive data...so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data." Bogdan and Biklen described ten examples of various ways data could be coded: a) setting/context; b) definition of situation; c) perspectives held by subjects; d) subjects' ways of thinking about people and objects; e) process; f) activities; g) events; h) strategies; i) relationships and social structure; j) methods. The original eleven general codes and six participant codes developed from the pilot study were utilized for the coding scheme. One code, "themes and issues" was developed into eleven new codes from the data in the current study. All codes are listed in Appendix H. Data was reviewed again and units of information, i.e., quotations from transcripts and information from field notes and observations, were coded and organized.

Three sets of analysis were utilized to examine three issues. The first set, within case coding, was conducted such that each case was coded and analyzed to reveal themes and issues relevant to that particular case. It also offered me a way of telling the stories and presenting the richness of each experience. The second set of analyses coded and analyzed the entire data set for purposes of describing and analyzing the transition process and the differences between the programs the students were transferring from and the programs they were transferring to. The final set analyzed the data in terms of four groups of participants, parents, sending teachers, receiving teachers, and administrators to address the research questions that guided this study, "How do participants experience the transition of children to these inherently different settings?" and "How does one's role in this process affect their experiences?". Since only four administrators agreed to participate in the interviews, their data was analyzed as one group and not divided into sending and receiving the way teachers were divided.

Thus, there was some level of comparison within cases as well as between participants. The purpose is to present themes, issues, and perceptions shared by everyone involved in the case and to understand how the universality of perceptions and issues affected that particular transition. The purpose of exploring shared perceptions and experiences within roles allowed for an understanding of how each person affects and is affected during the transition process in terms of the role they play.

#### Issues of Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to whether or not a variable that was measured or assessed at one time will yield the same result at another time. In quantitative research studies, investigators often perform reliability checks which involve readministration of the instrument, alternate forms of the instrument, or portions of the instruments at a different time in order to assess the stability of the data yielded by the instrument.

The issue of reliability in qualitative research is the extent to which one's findings can be

replicated. Thus it is conceptualized as the dependability or consistency of results obtained from the data (Merriam, 1988). I utilized three techniques recommended by Merriam (1988) in order to insure dependability of my results. The first technique was to share and explain my position as the investigator in terms of my biases and assumptions with the reader. By knowing my biases, the reader can assess how those biases may have affected the findings of the study. I discussed my assumptions and biases in chapter one and how my research was affected by my role as the psychologist in chapter four. In addition I believe I have provided thorough, honest descriptions of situations, participants, and social context in which the data is collected. Thus, the reader knows how the participants viewed themselves and their experiences.

The second technique, triangulation, refers to collecting data from different sources and techniques in order to compare the accuracy of the data obtained. This was the purpose for using participant observations and archival information as well as interviews to obtain the most accurate and complete data set

possible. The final technique is referred to as an audit trail in which the researcher describes in detail how the data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the process so that the research process could be replicated. In this study I conceptualized this discussion of methodology as the part of the audit trail. I also discuss, in chapter four, some of the process I experienced as the researcher and how it affected the decisions I made.

Validity refers to the extent to which the research and research measures are investigating what they purport to be investigating. For qualitative researchers the issue is to what extent can the researcher trust the findings (Merriam, 1988). The issue of internal validity in a qualitative study is to what extent do one's findings match reality. In order to address that issue, I attempted to present an honest rendering of how participants view themselves and their experiences. Two techniques discussed by Merriam were utilized in this study. Both these techniques, triangulation and presentation of researchers' bias and

orientation were addressed in the reliability discussion.

Generalization in quantitative studies refers to the extent to which the findings of one particular study will apply to other populations or situations. The issue of generalization is conceptualized differently in qualitative studies. The author provides a thorough description of the context, setting, participants, and issues and allows the reader to decide in what ways the findings could be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1988). Qualitative research typically investigates a problem within its particular context. In this study the issue of transferring students from a special center to self-contained classes in regular schools was addressed through several cases, each one explored in depth. The conclusions drawn relate only to other children in this particular situation and not necessarily to special education transition issues in general.

#### Chapter 4: Descriptions, Findings, and Interpretations

Unlike a quantitative study in which the results are expected to be presented separately from the discussion, qualitative research is often presented by topics or themes. In this study, I integrated the descriptions, findings, and interpretations in order to maintain the organization and flow of the presentation. I have chosen to present this work in two sections.

The first section presents each transition as an individual case study. Describing each transition in some detail serves several purposes. The first is that it humanizes the children, families, and staff around which each case was focused and tells their stories. It gives the reader a sense of the unique issues illustrated by each case. A variety of complex factors affected each case and affected the decision to transfer the child to a less restrictive setting. Finally, providing descriptions addresses the issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research. It provides the reader with a thorough rendering of the circumstances, and how the individuals perceived those

circumstances.

The second section, entitled general findings, provides a model of the transition process, as it occurred during the study, including time frames, roles, explicit and implicit structures, and tasks. The second section also examines the experiences and perceptions of the parents, teachers, and administrators and how these roles affected the transition process. These were the original research questions guiding this study. There is also a presentation of conclusions regarding the transition process and recommendations to facilitate it. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the students' names and the names of the schools to which they transferred have been changed.

#### Individual Case Studies

##### Allison's transition.

Allison is a six year old girl with curly brown hair, large brown eyes, and a pleasant disposition. She is beginning first grade in an outreach class at Chestnut Elementary School. She often stutters, particularly when she is nervous. Allison exhibits a

significant degree of anxiety and emotional fragility, particularly in response to academic challenges. She often displays fearfulness, easily gets upset over mistakes, and feels guilty for mistakes.

Intellectually, Allison's abilities fall in the mild range of mental retardation. She also exhibits speech difficulties and some mild difficulties with both fine and gross motor coordination. However, by accounts from previous teachers as well as records, Allison has made significant progress since being involved with the Infants and Toddlers program and the preschool program at Battle Monument School. At one point, she was not speaking or interacting with others, which led one physician to consider the possibility of a diagnosis of autism. However, Allison has become a very social, talkative child as long as she feels comfortable and secure in the environment.

Allison's mother was the only parent who expressed pleasure, rather than neutral feelings, over the fact that the program Allison would attend was housed in her home school. When asked what factors would make the transition successful, Allison's mother said,

Well, it's a good school. She knows some of the children that go there already. There might be some children she's gone to church with. They might even go there. Not only is she moving up in Chestnut, she's moving up in Sunday school as well, so she doesn't feel like a baby anymore. She realizes that 'I'm actually getting bigger here. I'm going to first grade at Chestnut, I'm moving up in Sunday school. I can do this.

For this parent, the transition to the home school provided a psychological and symbolic aspect to the issue as well as meeting some practical needs. The fact that she no longer needs a special education school suggests to Allison's mother that she is making progress towards being less disabled. She views the transition as confirmation that Allison is "getting to where she needs to be."

It's given her more confidence because she's not in a special education school anymore. It's given her confidence in herself to challenge herself. She was afraid to challenge herself last year because she was surrounded by all the special

needs children. Not that it was bad because it's given her sensitivity. She's sensitive to other children who have problems. She might not be in an outreach program in ten years or whatever, after she gets where she needs to be.

The parent no longer needs to explain to Allison why she does not go to the same school as the other children in the neighborhood. She continually talks about Allison being "ready for it" and "time to move on."

...Right it's time for her to move on. And Chestnut has the outreach program she needs, which gives her more opportunity to meet other kids in the neighborhood. She'll get more time at home. That's one thing I could say about the buses and stuff. She had to get on early in the morning and didn't have as much time at home.

So for Allison's mother, the combination of a transition to a regular school and her home school appeared to intensify feelings of moving towards a normal lifestyle. Allison's four year old sister started the preschool program at Chestnut this year.

Allison walks home from school with her mother, sister, and a second grade boy that her mother babysits. The parent focused her attention more on the fact that both her children attended a regular school than the fact that Allison is educated in a self-contained class with a slightly different curriculum.

The sending teacher described her decision-making process and the goals she developed for herself in facilitating Allison's transition. She described the decision making as a comparative process between what services she felt Battle Monument could offer the student and what the student would need for the next school year. The sending teacher also discussed what she needed to accomplish in terms of learning about programs and options in order to inform parents.

Well for me, it's an all new experience, so my goals were tremendous. I needed to get out and see the other programs. I did that. I needed to meet with other teachers, so that I could find out what a 'normal' curriculum offered, so that I could start or begin to do those skills with Allison,

so that it would make the transition easier. And one of my goals was to find out what is available out there, not only Chestnut but other opportunities also. I had a lot of goals myself, and I pretty much followed up with most of those.

The process by which Allison transferred to Chestnut was similar to that of the other students. In September of 1994 the ARD team, which included Allison's mother, teacher, the speech pathologist, and the principal discussed exploring alternative placements for Allison. The guidance counselor took Allison, her mother, and another parent and child to visit Chestnut Elementary School. Allison's mother liked the program immediately because the teacher answered her questions and included Allison in the activities right away. It seemed as if she really "belonged there" according to her mother. In May of 1995, another ARD meeting was held at which the teacher from Chestnut attended to officially discuss Allison's transition to Chestnut in August. Allison's mother asked several questions pertaining to whether or not

she would continue to receive certain services. The receiving teacher assured her and eased some of her concerns, so that she became more excited and less anxious.

After the meeting, the receiving teacher expressed concerns about the class size and the ages of the group. The class already served twelve children, ages five through twelve. Battle Monument's principal mentioned that he thought the class should be divided into a younger group and an older group. He said he would discuss this issue with the Southeast Area Office of Special Education whose function is to handle administration issues for special education in that area.

Over the summer, administrators from both Chestnut Elementary and the Southeast Area Office decided to split the class and hire a new teacher. This first-year special education certified teacher would teach the five to eight year old students. A new teacher presented as a surprise and initial concern for Allison's mother because she selected the program based on her impressions of the other teacher and class.

However, once Allison's mother met the new teacher at the summer open house, and observed similarities in their teaching styles and structure, she felt more secure.

Since the receiving teacher was hired over the summer, she felt she could only speak to her perceptions of Allison's placement and adjustment. She felt Allison had made a positive adjustment and was benefitting from the exposure to nondisabled peers. The receiving teacher reported that she observed Allison watching the other children and attempting to imitate their behaviors. She also reported that Allison plays at recess with children from other classes as well as with children in her self-contained class. The receiving teacher explained why she would have liked the opportunity to observe Allison at Battle Monument School and the importance of considering how different settings may have a powerful effect on any student's behavior.

They weren't even at this school, so I can't really talk to their teachers and ask 'What did you do during this situation

or what would happen?' I kind of felt like I was thrown in with these children. O.K., they're yours, what do you do with them. It would have been nice to observe them in another setting. Seeing how they reacted to another teacher or how they reacted in that setting at Battle Monument as compared to here. I really don't have a clue as to what differences are being made or what changes have been made.

Allison's transition illustrated a parent's desire to have her child in the community elementary school, so that she appeared to be "moving on". Some parents experience a sense of stigma when having to explain why their child attends a school entirely for students with disabilities. In this study, however, this was the only instance in which the home school was important to the parent. Other parents in the study were not particularly concerned with the location of the program, but they viewed the transition to a regular school as a positive move related to the progress of their child rather than a shift in models of service

delivery in the county. This factor held greater significance for the parents of elementary age students than for the parents of either the middle or high school students in this study.

David's transition.

David was considered by teachers who knew him to be one of the most likeable children at Battle Monument. He is nine years old, smiles a lot, and always appears to be in a good mood. He suffers from quadriparesis with superimposed hemiplegia which means that he walks with a limp and does not have complete use of his right arm. David has also been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus resulting in a shunt placement, moderate mental retardation, a history of seizures, and a bilateral hearing loss. To compensate for the hearing loss, David wears an auditory trainer which looks like a walkman and amplifies sounds. His school career began at the age of two when he attended the United Cerebral Palsy program until age four. Since then he has been in three other special center schools, two in Baltimore County and one in Baltimore City.

The transition to another outreach class at

Chestnut Elementary occurred quickly at the end of the 1994-1995 school year. The sending teacher asked the receiving teacher to observe him at Battle Monument one day when she happened to be there for another meeting. Both teachers agreed that he would be an appropriate candidate for the outreach program. The sending teacher approached David's mother with the idea and took her to visit the outreach class. One ARD meeting later the decision was made to transfer David to the Chestnut outreach class in the fall. David's mother described how the process happened and reported obtaining several professional opinions supporting the move.

Things were very easy. It surprised the heck out of me. I really didn't know that this was all going on. I did not know that Mrs. C, his teacher (in the outreach program) had been over to Battle Monument. Had been sitting in on Mrs. S's class.

She had met with David, and she watched David. They had all agreed at that time, that yes, David would be good at Chestnut. So then I had spoken to his teacher he had last year, and I forget what her name is. She had even told me that David was

ready. That Battle Monument was holding him back. The same came from K., his speech therapist. She said, 'go, it's the best move for David'. So after I had gotten several opinions, and even the guidance counselor at Battle Monument said he's ready. That's when I said, 'OK, let's give it a try'.

The sending teacher decided David would be a good candidate after she had observed progress in him from September 1994 to January 1995. She provided David with what she described as a significant amount of individual attention which facilitated the development of some pre-academic skills. She viewed David as a good candidate for transition in terms of his being "ready for it". The sending teacher also described how she conceptualizes the integration of disabled students into regular schools.

Maybe these children should be included in in the school, I don't think they should be secluded. I think they should be included. But they should have a special place where they are going to be taught what they need

to receive. Then they can eat in the same cafeteria and they can go to the same bathrooms, some will climb the monkey bars, some will just stay there and have sun and roll around and do whatever they can do, that's the inclusion they need. That comes to every area of our lives.

In the family we are all included in the house, but we all don't do the same thing, little kids do something, and bigger kids do something else, teenagers do something else. You can't have a teenager doing things that the little kids do because they are working on different levels. But they share the same house, the same bathroom, the same food, the same mother. There are a lot of things we share, but then there are special things we also do.

The receiving teacher reported being impressed with David's personality when she observed him at Battle Monument. She felt he was a good candidate because he demonstrated social skills and behaviors

that would help him adjust to a regular school environment. She said that her visit to Battle Monument, and the mother's visit to Chestnut facilitated the transition. I asked her how she presented her class to parents from Battle Monument who came to visit and what she thought was important to them.

We're really firm as far as rules, how to treat one another, we're consistent. Pretty much the program everyday, we have set goals. The children just respond. We've been lucky. Children like doing these things, learning, they do. That's pretty much it. The parents come in and watch the class. Then we take them for a tour of the building, but mainly they watch the class. I think they're mainly looking for behavior modification. What kind of control you have over your class. That's not a problem because we don't have a lot of problems. Then the

lessons. How we follow through,  
everything connects into one another.  
I think parents, that's their main  
concern. 'I want them here to learn  
something.'

Because of his age, David remained in the class  
with the original outreach teacher with the students  
whose ages ranged from nine to twelve. Chestnut is not  
David's home school. His mother considered this to be a  
positive aspect to the placement. She was concerned  
that her other son, who is one year younger than David,  
would suffer ridicule because of his brother's  
handicap. She felt very strongly about this despite the  
fact that both boys started attending the same daycare  
this year with no evidence of negative reactions to  
David's disabilities from the other children.

This question was discussed with me before  
because they told me at one time, David and C.  
might be going to the same high school, if  
things keep going as well as they are going.  
I'm not sure that is a good idea because C.  
will be ridiculed about his brother when

they know David is C.'s brother. I don't want C. to get ridiculed. Amazingly enough this summer, the children have been going to Garwood Elementary's (home school) daycare. David and C. both. The children up there love David to pieces, so he fits right in with them, and C. gets no ribbing or teasing about David's situation.

David's mother exhibited a pattern of planning for the worst and being thrilled or surprised when she got the best. By not fully knowing what to expect from David, she had difficulty evaluating whether or not she felt the transfer would be beneficial. She also expressed conflicting feelings about letting him go, which symbolized to her the eventuality of his independence versus holding him back, which produced guilt about hindering David's progress. David's mother felt particularly guilty when she saw David's positive reaction to the outreach class and the new skills he acquired. The initial feelings of concern about letting him go were expressed in the pre-transition interview while the feelings of guilt were expressed more

strongly in the post-transition interview.

...I think that may have been one of my drawbacks for letting him go, for making that decision for Chestnut. I wasn't sure because I don't want him to do everything for himself, but I know he has to because one day mommy's not going to be there...Even though I still feel that I may have been inadequate in my part saying maybe if I had done this a year or two earlier, it would have helped out even more, but I don't know.

David's transition was also an example of what happens when the student has significant medical issues. In this case David has a shunt implanted in his brain which maintains the appropriate levels of cerebrospinal fluid and pressure. If the shunt malfunctions or needs to be replaced, David becomes sick and requires surgery to replace it. David's mother felt it was particularly important for the nurse and teacher to get to know David very well, so they'd learn to recognize the symptoms.

I think the only thing that worries me, getting back to the one question, what was I in fear

of...everyone at Battle Monument knows David. Whenever there was a shunt malfunction, they could tell me, there's a problem here, this isn't David. So I would know, OK, shunt malfunction, because they know him. That's what scares me because the nurse at Chestnut is not familiar with shunts because when we met her the day that I took the tour of the school, I asked her that, so I'll be getting information to her on shunt revisions, and shunts, and their main function.

In order to deal with the increase in children with difficult medical issues, Baltimore County developed the position of a resource nurse who acts as a consultant to the school nurses. The current resource nurse in the southeast area formerly worked at Battle Monument and was familiar with David's case. She had specific insight into the mother's concerns about how the new school will deal with the shunt.

Well, the reason, I know the reason why the mother is concerned. Because the two times in his life, I'll say his recent life, where it had to be replaced, the incident began at school, where one

time he had severe headaches. It seemed as though the nurse was the one in the school who always discovered the symptom. I think the mother is worried the nurse in the new school won't be able to diagnose it, so to speak.

Thus, David's mother was somewhat aware of the trust and level of dependency she had on the nursing staff at Battle Monument. Issues in the transition of children with multiple needs are not simply limited to providing appropriate educational programming but include issues that could bring serious physical harm to the child. In David's case, the mother's level of concern did not prevent her from making the decision to transfer him. However, it was one of the factors she considered important for transition planning to assure the safety and physical well-being of her son. Interestingly, the receiving teacher was not overly worried about dealing with the shunt issue. She felt she had been told what symptoms to observe and would contact mom or the nurse if she had any hesitations. She relied on both the parent and the nurse to confirm or deny her observations and to take appropriate

action.

Katie's transition.

Katie's transition caused a stir amongst the professionals who work with her and a new challenge to the outreach classes. She is an eight year old girl with Down's syndrome, severe to profound mental retardation, a mild hearing loss, and attention deficit disorder. Katie is non-verbal and communicates through limited sign language and an augmentative communication device. She is ambulatory and toilet trained, but she needs assistance with toileting and dressing. Katie and her mother participated in the parent infant program, which was housed at Battle Monument School, since Katie was 18 months old. After that she attended the diagnostic pre-kindergarten program and elementary program at Battle Monument.

All of the children previously transferred into outreach classes in regular schools had intellectual abilities in at least the moderate range of mental retardation. Thus, the teachers and administrators in these classes had never dealt with a child's whose intellectual abilities were severely limited, nor had

they dealt with the lack of skills and behavior issues that occur with these students.

Katie's mother initiated the transition for three reasons. Primarily she was unhappy with the current teacher and classroom situation. She felt the class was unstructured, and the children were not learning or involved in activities. During this time, the guidance counselor had been told that Katie's mother was unhappy with her placement and might want to consider a change. He invited her to visit Chestnut's classes with him and another parent. Katie's mother felt the teacher at Chestnut was more structured than Katie's current teacher, so she told the assistant principal that she wanted to transfer Katie to that program.

The sending teacher felt that Katie's mother complained about things, but she was not committed to Katie's education. He said that she did not follow up with homework or often brought Katie to school late. Thus, the poor communication and rapport between the parent and teacher were not conducive to problem solving and working together. The sending teacher did not oppose the transition, although he felt Katie's low

skill level and behavior problems would present difficulties for the teacher in the outreach class. From my observations, there appeared to be some truth in both perspectives.

The second reason Katie's mother wanted to transfer her to an outreach class was that she felt that Katie needed to learn from and interact with non-disabled peers. This was her response when asked what were the negative aspects of Katie's placement at Battle Monument.

Being around strictly handicapped children.

Now it's most kids in wheelchairs. In her last classroom there were five children in wheelchairs. A lot of the children didn't talk. Katie's not communicating right now, so I think if she's around children who talk, maybe she'll start talking herself.

Katie's mother also felt that there was a greater likelihood that Katie would be accepted by the non-disabled students when she is a younger child and that it would facilitate continued acceptance as she grew older.

I'm hoping she goes to Chestnut now and gets accepted now, because when people look at Katie and little kids they go, 'Oh, she's so cute, it's Katie, leave her alone.' I'm hoping when Katie grows up, the kids around her grow up with her and accept her. 'That's Katie, that's just the way she is, accept her and accept the way she is. She's a part of us now.'

What concerned the parent most about the change in placement were the non-academic school skills the children needed to use in the different setting, particularly the cafeteria line. At Battle Monument all the students are served family style without having to choose their lunches. Katie's mother was concerned that Katie would grab everything she saw and not understand how to pay for it. She was also concerned about toileting issues since the receiving teacher was accustomed to students with more independence with toileting.

Many parents expressed similar concerns about how their child would handle the daily living types of tasks required of them in regular schools. These

findings were confirmed by questions parents frequently ask on tours of the school. "Where is the bathroom?". "Do they have to go through the cafeteria line?". "Will there be someone there to get them off the bus and take them to their classroom?".

Katie transferred into the same class as Allison, with the new teacher. While the sending teacher focused on Katie's behaviors, particularly hitting and touching children who were more handicapped than she, the receiving teacher saw fewer behavior problems but was concerned about her lower developmental level. She described Katie's first few days at Chestnut.

The first day of school, I will admit was a disaster. It was a brand new setting. She ate everything, rocks, paper, styrofoam. The second day, it was like a whole new child. She was scared and nervous being here (the first day). The second and third day she calmed down. She followed the other children, and she did what she was supposed to be doing.

The receiving teacher's difficulty was that Katie functions at a significantly lower intellectual level

than all of the other students. She finds it challenging to logistically provide for Katie's needs separately from the other children.

Well today we had a lesson, and I did it with the other children. I had someone work with Katie on something else. She can't handle the group of eight. It's too large for her. Even if I break it down cause I only have one assistant, and we basically have two groups in this classroom, and with Katie that makes three. I can't really do three lessons at a time...To me that's my biggest challenge, and I don't want her falling through the cracks.

From my observations, Katie had demonstrated significant behavior improvements by being in a class where the other children had more capabilities than she. She did not have opportunities to touch or hit children because they did not tolerate it. She also modeled appropriate behaviors other children exhibited, such as sitting in her seat, walking in line, and raising her hand when she wanted something. With assistance, Katie negotiated the cafeteria lines, the

buses, and the bathrooms. Katie's mother also felt that Katie was happier in her new class and less bored.

Well, last year she used to cry when I put her on the bus. When I would show up she would cry. Not a pain cry, but you could tell she didn't want to be there. She was bored. Now she puts her bookbag on herself and walks out the door and tells me goodbye...She actually likes school now. She looks forward to it.

Although the receiving teacher concedes these social and behavioral benefits to Katie, she also feels that she needs a one-to-one assistant to work with Katie on some tasks that are more developmentally appropriate. Otherwise she feels it will be difficult to meet her academic needs.

#### Brian's transition.

Brian is a shy, soft-spoken six year old boy who attempts to withdraw into the background so as not to draw attention to himself. He has been diagnosed with Pierre Robin syndrome which includes mild to moderate mental retardation and slightly dysmorphic facial features, particularly around the eyes. He also has a

moderate hearing loss. Brian's transition began in the spring of 1995. He attended the placement to which he would be transferred in the fall for two hours each day. He had difficulty with this process, which illustrates how difficult it is to project the success or failure of something based on a trial period.

Brian and his mother participated in the Parent/Infant program since 1988, and Brian was determined eligible and in need of special education services in 1992. At that time Battle Monument School was considered an appropriate placement due to Brian's need for intensive therapy services, particularly speech/language therapy and occupational therapy.

At an ARD meeting held at the very end of March, 1995, Brian's mother said she'd like to consider sending Brian to a less restrictive placement. The team decided that Maplewood Elementary would be the appropriate choice for several reasons. Maplewood was Brian's home school, and it had the functional outreach class he required. An additional bonus was that Maplewood is located next to Battle Monument. Many of the Battle Monument students go to Maplewood for

opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers in either lunch or special area classes, such as music or art.

The team decided that Brian should attend the class at Maplewood to see how he would handle the environment, so they set up a schedule in which he came to Battle Monument and was walked over to Maplewood by one of the instructional assistants at 9:00 a.m. He stayed until 11:00 a.m. at which time the assistant escorted him back to Battle Monument. This process began in the beginning of April. The team met again in mid May to discuss Brian's transition. According to both teachers and his mother, Brian cried while at Maplewood. He told his mother another student was picking on him. The receiving teacher said this was not the case. Both teachers felt that Brian would make a better adjustment when he attended the class full time next year, so the team decided to transfer Brian in the fall of 1995.

Over the summer I contacted Brian's mother to conduct the pre-transition interview. She immediately returned my call, sounding panicked and upset. She was

very nervous about the transition and felt that it might not be a good idea. Brian's mother began to describe her concerns, particularly issues regarding the regular school tasks such as the cafeteria or restrooms. She said that she had called the assistant principal at Maplewood and the special education coordinator for the southeast area, telling them she wanted to have an ARD team right away. The assistant principal assured her that an ARD could be scheduled as soon as school started in the fall.

During the interview Brian's mother discussed her feelings that Battle Monument could no longer give him the academic skills she felt he should acquire. This motivated her to make the change in placement.

Right, I'm the one that told them that I felt I wanted him mainstreamed, and they had a meeting and said they thought he could handle it, but now I'm the one that I think is not handling it too well.

Although the initial concern Brian's mother expressed involved daily life activities, as the interview progressed she discussed Brian's difficulties

interacting with people and her concern about his acceptance in society.

The older he gets I feel the harder it is, especially taking him out in society, you know, and interacting with other kids and all. (My question) When you take him out, what makes it hard? (Her response) What makes it hard? People staring. Kids saying things. Sometimes I get rude when I'm in a bad mood, but most of the time I just ignore it or give them a dirty look and go on. Brian doesn't understand. He stares back at them and looks at them the way they're looking at him. Sometimes I just brush it off, but there are times you can't brush it off, it hurts too much.

The parent's reaction to the hurt she's felt when Brian has been exposed to the public appeared to be driving her resistance to send him to a general public school. However, her desire to see him attain better academic skills outweighed her immediate fears. She also felt the reason Brian cried at Maplewood was that

he had to comply with demands to which he was not accustomed. However, she wanted Brian to learn to comply with the demands and structure the Maplewood class provided. Thus, she agreed to send him to Maplewood for the period of two months.

The sending teacher described her perspective on the trial and why she felt Brian had difficulty with it.

So this is home for him. Then he goes over to another school, and he goes into a class of approximately fourteen or fifteen other children, and then he's there for a short period. He's actually there from nine to eleven. Then he comes back to us. My feeling was that he really doesn't know quite where he belongs. Making it somewhat stressful for him.

Once Brian started school at Maplewood in September, the crying stopped, and he adjusted to the class and the cafeteria line. In fact, he participated in class, raised his hand for assistance, and interacted with some of the other children. I asked the receiving teacher why she thought there was such a

dramatic difference between his behavior from May to September.

I guess I have a lot of mixed feelings about that because personally if I were going to do it again, I wouldn't do it at the time of the year that it was done. For a couple of reasons, one being, and I think the most important was that as we got closer to the end of the year, I think some of the structure we had typically throughout the year was lessened a little bit. The activities were different. We weren't sticking to our normal schedule. There were a lot of fun kinds of things that we were doing at the end of year to bring some closure to the year. He was brought in the midst of all that. Although the kids that I had all year were handling it, it was difficult for him to have me loosen up on the structure... The other thing too that was not so great was the consistency. I think sometimes his mom felt in the beginning that he was being stressed out a whole lot by the transition, and so sometimes she didn't send him.

I think also sometimes there was a break down in communication between teacher to teacher, and he didn't always get here when he was supposed to. I guess if I were to do it again, I would do it closer to the beginning of the school year, so that he would know, and establish rules and boundaries, all those things you do at the beginning of year. He came in, and he really didn't have a sense of all those things that are so important. Also making sure he would be here everyday on a consistent basis would be the best way to do it.

Although the intent of the trial period was to provide information about how Brian would handle the transition, it actually provided misleading information which resulted in panicking the parent. The information was misleading because the factors suspected of causing difficulty, the lack of consistency in attendance, timing in the school year, time in two places, were not the conditions under which the actual transition would occur. Some of the parent's concerns about Brian's adaptive skills have also been eased since he has

adjusted and demonstrated greater independence in the new placement.

Margaret's transition.

Margaret is a pretty twelve year old girl with cerebral palsy and moderate mental retardation. She walks with the support of canes, but she fatigues when she has to walk long distances. Margaret was first evaluated at the Kennedy-Krieger Institute and diagnosed with cerebral palsy at the age of twenty-seven months. The staff at Kennedy recommended that Margaret attend United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) a non-public intensity V school that specializes in children with cerebral palsy and provides highly intensive physical therapy.

Four years later Margaret began attending Battle Monument School. Her parents had personal connections to the administration and "tremendous respect" for the "old Battle Monument" program. Margaret's parents are adamantly opposed to inclusion and the changes that have occurred in Baltimore County Public Schools in the last couple of years. They feel that regular and special education children should not be integrated and

that special education children should be served in self-contained classes.

Margaret's mother described their decision to transfer Margaret to an outreach program as one of necessity that they had to do because Battle Monument was changing and was no longer appropriate for her.

...eventually we would have to do that because we knew Battle Monument would turn into a warehouse and that Margaret would not belong there...we hoped in a couple of years time, much of bugs would have been worked out, so by waiting we thought it would give Margaret a better chance of succeeding, and we would feel comfortable in her going into an inclusion program in a regular school.

The other factor that led Margaret's parents to consideration of an outreach placement was that Margaret was the only girl on the middle school team. They were concerned that at a time when peers are important to adolescents, Margaret did not have any girl friends.

Plus, when I went to observe Margaret's class

(at Battle Monument), and I saw that there were very few children on Margaret's level. She was the only girl there. I knew this was a very important time, where she needed to have other girl friends. I just saw that as kids were being moved out, that Margaret had to be pretty much on her own and occupy herself with things. I knew we had to make a decision right away because as the year was ending, I could see it getting worse and worse.

Margaret's parents explored two functional outreach programs at local middle schools, one of which was her home school. They visited both programs a couple of times in order to determine if they felt comfortable enough with either program to send Margaret. Margaret's mother described the agonizing decision-making process. The first time they visited Merritt, the program at Margaret's home school, the school was not aware they were coming and were not prepared. Margaret's parents did not have a good impression of it. Margaret's mother liked the second program because the teacher answered their questions thoroughly, showed them several classrooms, and gave

them an opportunity to talk to students.

However, upon a return visit, she realized that the curriculum was designed for higher functioning children intellectually and would require significant modifications to meet Margaret's needs. They also observed a teacher who was sarcastic to one of the students, who had difficulty understanding a concept. Margaret's parents were concerned the teachers might not be patient enough to accommodate someone with her limitations.

The primary concerns about Margaret's transition was how Margaret would manage the new setting with her physical limitations and whether or not she would be safe. The parents visited Merritt a second time with Margaret, the physical therapist, and the occupational therapist from Battle Monument. Their purpose was to explore the setting to determine where Margaret might have difficulty and talk to the Merritt staff about solutions and adaptations. The parents had a better impression of Merritt on this second visit.

However, the final decision was not made until after the parents, the teacher and guidance counselor

from Merritt, and the teacher and therapists from Battle Monument met once more to discuss any concerns or issues. Margaret's mother reported after the transition that this meeting was extremely helpful in addressing her concerns and making her feel supported by the staff at both schools. The decision was made in June, a week before the end of the school year.

The sending teacher presented as highly attuned to the parents needs and concerns. She responded to the interview questions by articulating the parents' concerns and perspectives. Although the sending teacher perceived her role as to support Margaret's parents in whatever decision they made, she described how she thought the activities in which her class participated with non-disabled peers at the local middle school influenced the parents' decision through peer pressure.

You asked just a few questions before what made the changes occur. In September, the parents were reluctant to even send Margaret out to another middle school even for a lunch program or activities. Peer pressure in classroom because other students were

interacting and going over and having a good time and talking about it was another factor. Once the parents saw Margaret would go home and say 'I want to go to Stricker (the regular middle school) lunch, I want to go to Stricker clubs.' Peer interaction helped a whole lot.

Margaret transferred to Merritt Middle School, which is her home school. The receiving teacher previously taught at Battle Monument for twelve years. Four years ago he started one of the first outreach classes in Baltimore County at Merritt with students from Battle Monument. When I asked him what the differences between Battle Monument and the outreach classes were, the receiving teacher emphasized the development of social skills and age appropriate behaviors through modeling and incidental learning.

The main one is socialization. As a special education teacher who has done this for many years, well a number of years. The number one thing we teach our kids is not reading and math. It's how to get along in the world.

How to be an appropriate person. How to act appropriately, socialization. They've been telling us for years that from an adult level, the reason our kids do not do well as adults is that they do not have appropriate social skills. I don't think, by it's nature, a handicapped school can give them that. I mean all that simulation that I did for those number of years, it just doesn't replace walking along the hallway with the 7th grade. There's no way to replace that. That's the biggest difference in our settings, and I think it's the biggest plus of our setting because it puts these kids in a situation where they have to eat with other people, they have to go to class with everyone, not just their handicapped peers but all their peers. I think that is something that they need. Our kids in regular ed., it sounds stupid that everyone says this can help regular ed. kids, but it's a proven fact. Last year in the 7th grade we did all

specials except for gym, and my kids were not "Mr. S's class" or "Mr. S's kids," they were "my classmates." It sounds like semantics, but it's a big difference in a child's point of view.

According to Margaret's parents, the receiving teacher, guidance counselor, and assistant principal worked very hard to accommodate Margaret's needs. Her parents were concerned that Margaret would regress in walking if the schedule or facility proved too demanding. They did not want her to use a wheelchair or walker simply to deal with distance or fatigue. They wanted Margaret to be able to walk with canes.

The Merritt staff designed her schedule, so that Margaret had minimal distances to travel each day with no backtracking. Her homeroom, or homebase as it is called, is next door to the self-contained class where she receives all of her functional academic subjects. She also leaves each class early, just as she did at Battle Monument, to get to her next class. Thus, she avoids the crowds during normal time changes. For all their concerns and resistance to the move, Margaret's

parents said they were very happy with the new program. They felt Margaret enjoyed it and was very enthusiastic about the other children. They also appreciated the extensive accommodations and frequent communications made by the staff.

As nervous and hesitant as we were about this, it has worked out very well. We knew we we're going to work out solutions. That's not been a problem at all. We're very eager to work with the school staff as much as we can. We've tried to let them understand that, and they've done very well in communicating with us about any problems or any ideas that might work a bit better.

Margaret's transition illustrated how a parent's impressions affect their decision about which programs would suit them. Margaret's parents have always been very involved in her education and appear to possess more sophisticated knowledge about programs, service delivery models, and curriculum than many other parents. However, their subjective impressions about the staff and how the school staff interacted with disabled children guided their decisions. Eventually

their decision was based on the accommodations made by the receiving school, their better impressions upon the second visit, and the curriculum. Home school was not a factor in the decision at all. The only advantage they saw in attending the home school was that it was slightly closer to home than the other program.

Tim's transition.

Tim's transition demonstrated the difficulties in transferring a student from a Special Center placement to a program in a general education public high school. A variety of factors complicated Tim's transition to the degree that early in the new school year many participants were considering it a failure.

Tim is a fourteen year old boy with mild cerebral palsy and moderate mental retardation. His disabilities are not obvious until he begins to speak, at which point the listener notices his articulation difficulties and the limited content of his language. He also has some mild fine motor difficulties which first became evident to me when I observed him in the shop class at his new placement. He had difficulty using tools to cut wires or screwing objects together.

Tim was determined eligible for Infants and Toddler services at the age of two years at which time he started attending Battle Monument School. He was initially determined eligible for special education as a multiply handicapped student. He received intensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy services until 1987. Now he receives speech/language services on a consultative basis only.

Discussions about transition to an outreach program were held in 1994, but Tim's mother felt nervous and reluctant to transfer him. However, the sending teacher and the guidance counselor strongly felt that Tim needed to mature and meet the social and behavioral demands that a regular education setting would place on him. Tim's mother was swayed in her decision by her observations that the other students Tim's age were significantly more disabled than he and that he had limited opportunities for appropriate peer interactions at Battle Monument.

Thus, Tim's mother began visiting two high school programs. She hoped that Tim could attend a middle school program because of his immaturity, but she was

discouraged from that because if Tim started a middle school program, he would have to transfer to a high school program the following year. The team felt that two transitions in two years would not be in Tim's best interest. She preferred the high school program that was housed in Tim's home school "due to the atmosphere and the way they presented the program. The way the closeness felt of the students and their attitudes and behaviorwise." Tim also visited the program for a half day and reportedly liked it.

The sending teacher strongly believed that Tim needed to "move on" particularly since his social skills were his area of strength. The teacher talked about his concerns regarding whether or not other staff and students will understand Tim. He was concerned they would not be committed to making accommodations for him. He also commented on the greater difficulty in transferring older students than preschool age students.

The hardest part is sort of worrying, not worrying, well worrying if they're going to be happy there. Like I said before, the

problem is those people understanding what's going on with these kids. I've seen it happen before where other kids kid them. All these years you try to build their self-esteem up and then you tell them that yeah, they have a few problems, sure, they're not insurmountable, then when you get them out and they just tear them apart. That's hard. The whole society has to change. And that's maybe another reason why this inclusion is good. Because in the beginning when you took kids who were 18 years old and you threw them in a high school situation, that was terrible. But if you start them young and they come up together in the same class or whatever, that's a whole different ballgame because then they get to know the kid. They know sure he has some problems, but he's O.K...

The differences between the Fairview program and Battle Monument were striking. Fairview educates 1,850 students approximately 30 of which are special

education students in self-contained classes. Tim's self-contained class at Battle Monument had five students, only two of which were verbal, a teacher and an instructional assistant. His classes at Fairview had twenty-six students, one teacher, one instructional assistant, one parent helper, and two high school age peer helpers.

Tim's day at Fairview begins with going to breakfast in the cafeteria, going to a regular homeroom where he sits in the back with another special education student. This student directs Tim from homeroom to the classroom where his first two academic subjects, math and social studies are conducted. The students remain in the classroom while the teachers change rooms. After those two classes, about half the students go to the shop room. After shop, some of this same group goes to a smaller room for reading. All the changes occur during regular class changes when all the students are in halls enroute to their next class.

Tim's transition to Fairview was coordinated by the chairman of special education department. Tim's mother thought that he would be Tim's teacher. She did

not realize Tim would have five different teachers until she received his schedule during the summer. In mid September I called the chairman of the department requesting an opportunity to observe the program and set up an interview for the study. He informed me that he would welcome my observations because he had just had a meeting with Tim's teachers who were concerned about the appropriateness of his placement. Their specific concerns included the fact that Tim had fewer academic skills and was less mature than the other students. He also engaged in disruptive behaviors such as rocking in his chair, calling out, clapping at inappropriate times, and making noises.

These behaviors were observed at Battle Monument but were not as obvious because the other students engaged in similar behaviors. The students at Fairview reacted negatively, making derogatory comments, when Tim behaved this way. The chairman of the special education department commented that they had accepted another student "who looked just like Tim on paper, and he was successful." They thought Tim would fit in. However, the teachers did not know what to expect from

Tim compared to the other students in the program, and they did not know what modifications to make.

At the same time, Tim's mother became concerned that the academics were too difficult for him when she saw the work he brought home. She did not believe the staff was aware of Tim's capabilities and limitations. She became confused when some of the teachers told her that the program was "too academic" for Tim, but the special education chairman told her that he was adjusting well. She felt that Tim enjoyed the program and made new friends, but she was concerned about his academic difficulties affecting his self-esteem.

I know there's a lot of things he can do if he's really pushed to do it. If they really take time. But I don't want him to take away from the other children in the class if it's not the appropriate class for him, to where all their attention is taken away because they're more independent, and they have to spend more time on Tim because he's disrupting the class. Then I don't want him to feel

like his self-esteem is lower than all the other kids. He's seen what all these other kids can really do, and he's sitting there. I don't want him to feel that either.

At the end of September, I went to Fairview to observe Tim and his classes. By that time the teachers made modifications such as using peer helpers and paid parent helpers to provide individualized instruction. They modified his work and developed a response cost program to manage his behaviors. The large number of students presented excellent opportunities for peer interaction, development of appropriate social skills, and language stimulation. Tim appeared to enjoy the classes, staying involved and interactive even though some of the material was too difficult for him to understand. He flirted and socialized with different girls in each of his classes, and there were some students who tolerated Tim's neediness and immaturity.

I spoke to the special education chairman after the visit. He said that he would like to see Tim stay, but the teachers weren't sure if Fairview was "the best

placement for Tim". He seemed surprised when I provided him with positive feedback. He asked me to attend a sixty day review for Tim and share that feedback at the meeting, which I agreed to do.

By the sixty day review meeting, Tim's mother was still confused and concerned about the academics, but she saw how much Tim enjoyed it and was hoping the staff would be able to accommodate his needs. The staff at Fairview also considered the benefits Tim gained from their program and continued to modify and accommodate him. They hired another teacher who had experience working with students with Tim's needs. This new teacher worked with the lower functioning half of the class. The staff at Fairview also utilized peer helpers on a more consistent basis. The ARD team agreed that Fairview was an appropriate placement at this time. The ARD team also recommended that Tim's mother to visit the classes, which brought her some relief and reassurance.

Tim's transition demonstrated how the lack of communication caused misperceptions and misunderstandings. Both Tim's mother and the staff at

Fairview had concerns that needed to be addressed. However, both parties perceived that the other party was unhappy with the placement and wanted a change, which was not the case. Once the Fairview staff made accommodations and recognized that Tim's mother did not necessarily want to change placements, they felt more secure and modified their position about changing placements. Once Tim's mother received assurances from them that they could meet Tim's needs, she felt more secure. It was the initial miscommunication that could have potentially created a failure situation for the transition.

#### General Findings

##### The transition process.

The transition of a student from an intensity V special center to an outreach class can happen in a variety of ways. Historically during the 1992-1993 school year the first outreach classes in the southeast area were created when teachers from Battle Monument started classes in regular schools by taking groups of students from Battle Monument. The administrators and support personnel reported that this process felt more

comfortable than the current system of moving each student individually because the previous students had the same teacher and peers. The program and curriculum remained the same, and so there was the perception that the class was moved from one school and relocated in another. There appeared to be less focus on individual concerns than on concerns for each group as a unit.

The most common model used now is something I have designated as the "ready candidate model" which is based on a mainstreaming conceptualization rather than an inclusion conceptualization. In this model students whose abilities and behaviors indicate that they could be managed in an outreach class are selected as candidates. There is generally agreement amongst the parent, sending teacher, and receiving teacher that the student would be appropriate for the outreach class. There is some similarity to Biklen's (1985) model of mainstreaming referred to as "teacher deals" in which teachers mainstream students in the absence of a program or policy from the system. In the "ready candidate model" there is a program, but there are no clear guidelines to determine candidates. This is the

model that represented all of the transitions in this study. In both "teacher deals" and the "ready candidate model" the momentum comes from the teachers who wish to transition the child.

Other infrequently used models are the "programs looking for students model" that was described in the pilot study, and a "parent search model." The "programs looking for students" model was specific to the development of new programs designed to teach students with autism, in which children diagnosed with autism were transferred to these classes. In the parent search model, some parents attempt to explore or create their own options including the placement in regular classes at the home school. Although parents are explicitly encouraged to explore their home school and are told a program can be designed to meet their child's needs, they get implicit messages from staff at the regular schools advising against such a course of action. Some parents reported becoming frustrated and confused by the reception they received when exploring options outside of those already developed.

The transition process is shown in Figure 1. The

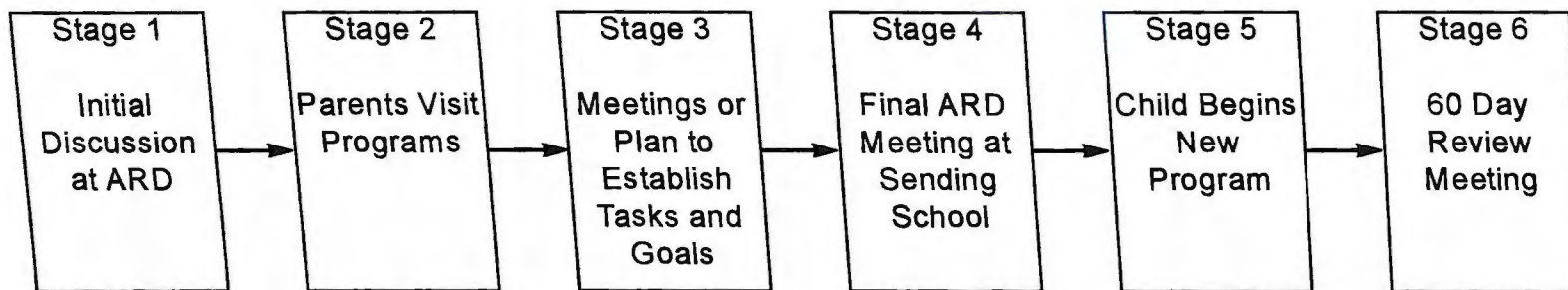


Figure 1. Informal and formal stages of the transition process

initial stage of the transition process begins with the first discussion of the transition. The discussion usually occurs at an annual review of the IEP or at a three year re-evaluation meeting. The initiator of the transition is a non-formalized role played by the person who wants the child transferred to an outreach class. Typically that person is the sending teacher who has the best knowledge of the child's skills and abilities. Occasionally it is a parent, although parents do not often have knowledge of the options for their child. Sometimes the initiator may be support personnel such as the speech therapist.

The initiator must have enough drive to push the process forward by making sure the appropriate steps are taken. Otherwise the staff get consumed with the daily demands of their jobs, and the transition may not occur. This is because each transition occurs individually rather than through a highly structured, systematic process. The transitions typically occur over an entire school year with the child actually transferring to the new placement in the beginning of the next school year.

Thus, the initial stage of the transition usually occurs in the fall at the annual review for two reasons. The first reason is that the sending school ARD team is required to discuss least restrictive environment options with all parents as part of the federal mandate. The purpose of the discussion is to remind parents that there are less restrictive placement options available, should they wish to consider them. This discussion naturally leads into further discussion about whether or not the sending teacher or other team members feel it would be a good idea to consider such options.

At the initial stage the team discusses possible options, identifies initial concerns, and the counselor agrees to set up visits for the parents. The sending teachers often discuss how the child has responded to structured activities with non-disabled peers, such as eating lunch at the local elementary school. While representatives from the child's home school are almost always invited to these meetings, they typically do not attend unless there is consideration of transferring the child to his or her home school.

The second stage consists of parent visits to possible receiving schools. The parents attend either the school's open house or a scheduled visit with the counselor from Battle Monument. These visits are important because they allow the parents to make the abstract idea of their child transferring to another program into something concrete. They can attempt to imagine their child in that class or working with that teacher. The sending guidance counselor attempts to uncover the parents' concerns, and then he helps them formulate questions that will address these concerns. The counselor said that parents are often initially defensive and ready to find a reason why their child should not attend that school. However, the staff at the receiving schools are typically so open and receptive that by the end of the visit, parents are often excited about the possibilities.

During the visits, parents meet teachers and administrators, observe classes, talk to students, and ask questions during a brief meeting. Most of their questions reflect specific details about the school routines such as "What are the school hours?" or "Will

my child eat in the cafeteria with the regular students?" Occasionally parents ask the receiving teacher about curriculum or discipline policies. These visits are typically the first point that receiving staff become involved in the transition process.

I refer to the third stage as the planning and organization stage. Although it is not formalized and occurs differently in every case, it is probably the most important stage of the process. It is the time between the initial visits and the final ARD meeting to accomplish tasks and establish goals that facilitate each transition.

At this stage, participants are still exploring options and engaging in problem solving types of tasks. Some of the activities may include trial periods in the new program, additional visits to the programs, teaching the child skills for the regular school environment, and meeting with the receiving staff to determine what accommodations might be necessary. Sometimes the parents take the child on visits to the receiving school to see how the child reacts to the class, how the other students react to the child, or

how the teacher reacts to the child. It provides an opportunity for both the parents and child to get familiar and comfortable with the new placement. Depending on the case, the receiving staff may or may not be involved at this stage.

The fourth stage is the final ARD meeting at the sending school typically occurs in the spring. At that time the parent is expected to decide whether or not he or she wants to transfer the child to an outreach class. The receiving teachers and administrators are always invited to this meeting. The receiving personnel discuss what the child will need to begin their program, such as equipment and transportation needs. The support personnel make recommendations regarding techniques, devices, and issues that may arise in the new placement. The sending and receiving teachers discuss modifications to the IEP. The success of this meeting and the parent's comfort level with the decision are highly dependent on what was accomplished during the planning and organization stage. This meeting is not typically a working meeting but a meeting to finalize the decision through formal

channels. This is the last time at which the sending school staff are officially and usually involved in the process.

The fifth stage starts when the child enters school at the beginning of the year. Occasionally, some programs may have summer activities such as another open house or an "orientation tea". The administrators meet with the parents just prior to the start of school to hold intake conferences. This is essentially the process of registering the child for school. They address what they refer to as "housekeeping" issues such as bus routes, emergency contacts, and equipment or special protocols for the child's care. After the intake conference, most issues are addressed directly between parents and teachers.

The sixth and final stage of the transition process is the sixty day review meeting at the receiving school. At this meeting, the parent and receiving school staff discuss how the child is reacting to the new class. The staff address what accommodations have been made and what further accommodations are required. It is also an opportunity

to address parents' concerns or questions. Typically at this meeting feedback is given about whether the transition and placement are considered successful by the participants. The only time the sending school staff might be involved at these stages is when either the parent or receiving school staff perceive a problem and request their involvement. There is no formal follow-up mechanism for sending staff, so if it occurs, it happens on an individual basis.

Overall, the transition process at Battle Monument parallels the transition process of each child, showing a certain degree of insecurity and ambiguity. This is because there appears to be a lack of clear articulation of where the system is going and how it is getting there, at least according to the teachers and parents. There is also a lack of consistent conceptualization regarding inclusion amongst teachers, parents, administrators, and support personnel, which is consistent with findings by Laughlin (1994). The splits appear to be amongst individual people rather than between different factions such as teachers versus parents. Although at this point the move into outreach

classes would more appropriately be termed "mainstreaming" rather than "inclusion", sending teachers continue to push the limits and attempt to transfer more severely disabled students each year as the process continues to evolve.

Program differences.

Table 4 illustrates the differences between the special center classes and the outreach classes based on my observations as well as descriptions by the participants. Some of the important differences emphasized by participants in the general education schools were the larger populations, the opportunities to interact with non-disabled students by sheer proximity, the emphasis on academics in the curriculum, and the itinerant nature of therapy services.

The outreach class sizes are larger by an average of almost three students, so that participants who reported smaller class size at Battle Monument were correct. The students in the outreach classes are more verbal, mobile, and independent than the students at Battle Monument allowing for better peer modeling in terms of language and skills from the students in their

Table 4  
Differences Between Programs

	<u>Special Center</u>	<u>Outreach Classes</u>
School Size	Approx. 100	Approx. 600-1850
Class Size	6.5	9.3
Degree of MR	Moderate to Profound	Moderate to Borderline
Wheelchairs	1.3	.16
Non-verbal	3.6	1.0
Dep. ADL's	1.6	.16
Lunch	Family Style	Cafeteria Line
Transportation	Special Education Bus	Regular Education Bus
Curriculum	Functional Skills	More Academic
Students	All Special Education	Regular and Special Education
Therapists	Full time on staff	Itinerant

Note: Dependent Activities of Daily Living = ADL's. Dep. ADL's refers to students who are totally dependent for all activities of daily living. Numbers indicate the mean number of students per class.

class as well as from non-disabled peers. This also allows teachers and instructional assistants to spend more time engaged in instructional activities than caretaking activities.

One disadvantage of the outreach classes noted by the participants, particularly sending staff and parents was that therapists in outreach classes work as itinerants one or two days a week at the school. This does not permit them the time or the flexibility to work collaboratively with other staff and engage in the extensive consultation that the therapists at Battle Monument do.

#### Parents' experiences and perceptions.

For the parents, the decision to transfer their child from a special center to general education school is sometimes agonizing. They frequently emphasized their need to be "ready for it" as well as their child's need. The parents felt that they were the primary decision makers, and they did not report feeling pressured into making a decision. They were comforted by the knowledge that their child could return to Battle Monument if the transition was

unsuccessful.

One of the primary reasons all the parents decided to transfer their child was that they felt their child had less severe disabilities than the other students. This was the impact of age appropriate groupings which made the differences between the more severely disabled and less severely disabled children more apparent. Parents commented about the numbers of children in wheelchairs and how disabled the other students appeared to them.

The children at Battle Monument. I thought I had it bad, but when I see some of the other children there who are in wheelchairs, and who will never be able to walk, talk, speak, sit up by themselves, or whatever, it's, I feel like I'm holding him back by keeping him in a place like that. And it was a very difficult decision for me to make because it has always been a very sheltered environment for him, but I really think he's ready to go out there and join those other kids.

The parents were concerned about the lack of stimulation and modeling of skills and behaviors for their child. Two of the parents felt their child was learning inappropriate behaviors from the lower functioning children at Battle Monument. Two other parents felt that their child was not exhibiting certain skills they expected because of the absence of peers exhibiting the skills. Parents preferred their child's classroom to consist of children who are on the "same level" or above. They believed that the teachers would challenge their children and make them exhibit desired skills and behaviors.

Once the parents began to consider a change in placement, then another significant factor in their decision was their impressions and perceptions about the outreach classes they visited. Parents reported that they examined whether or not the curriculum was appropriate for their child. Did the teacher have the skills to teach their child, and was she enthusiastic about teaching their child? Were the skills the other children demonstrated skills they wanted their child to acquire? How would their child "fit in" to the class?

One factor that surprisingly was not an issue for five of the six parents interviewed was the home school issue. Parents had either neutral or sometimes negative reactions to sending the child to their home school. They reported that it was not a factor in determining which program their child would attend. Negative reactions were the result of negative experiences they had with other children in the school or sometimes if they attended the school as a child. Some parents reported they had heard negative reports about the school. Some parents did not necessarily want their child interacting with neighborhood peers. Even though Chestnut Elementary was not Katie's home school, her mother felt comfortable sending her to the outreach class there because she had attended Chestnut Elementary as a child and had a positive experience. All parents emphasized that their feelings about the class and teacher were the predominant factors in deciding where to send their child.

I always got the impression the kids were going to be placed in a program that was appropriate for them, but then all I was

hearing was 'home school, it's his home school'. So now I'm thinking, is he there because it's his home school or is he there because it's the appropriate program.

Thus, the concept of "home school" does not hold significant meaning for most of these parents. This finding was inconsistent with findings of Kaskinen-Chapman (1992) in which parents reported proximity to home, opportunities to attend the same school as peers, and opportunities to ride the same bus as peers as reasons for participating in an integrated program. The parents in this study may also have isolated themselves and their children from community involvement and never developed an identity with their communities because of their disabled children. Another hypothesis is that with the large numbers of schools in this semi-urbanized environment, distinct neighborhoods associated with particular schools might not be as identifiable as in more rural types of areas. Parents simply view the selection of placement as having several options from which to choose.

Despite the anxiety being the decision maker created, parents felt this was one of the most important roles they played during the process. Other roles included guiding and supporting their child, and acting as the "watch dog" or "protector" looking out for what they feel are their child's best interests.

Some of the concerns expressed by the parents were the same pretransition concerns noted in Hanline and Halvorsen (1989). These included concerns regarding physical safety, rejection or ridicule by other students, and the loss of an accepting environment in which the child had extensive access to related services. Other concerns expressed by parents in this study were how the child would cope with regular school activities such as the cafeteria, restrooms, and lockers as well as what academic demands might be placed on them.

In hindsight parents recognized that their own anxiety and overprotectiveness created the primary barrier to the transition. Some of these feelings related to specific concerns for their child in the new placement. However some of these were born of the

change the transition meant for them. The parents viewed Battle Monument as a source of resources in terms of emotional support, expertise, and people able to help them accomplish tasks related to the disability, such as dealing with medical or social service agencies. These resources came from other parents at the school as well as staff because it acts as a community of parents with children with disabilities. They always knew the staff understood and accepted their child's disability.

Although Hanline and Halvorsen (1989) found parents reported that placement in a general education school focused less on their child's disability, that finding was not supported in this study. Some parents reported that losing that community of parents at Battle Monument only made them feel isolated and heightened their awareness of their child's limitations.

You go to the PTA meeting, and all those other parents, I feel like they had no idea what we as parents of a special education child go through. Their children,

they have hopes of being successful and doing well in life. With ours we know there are going to be limits. I kind of miss that bond we have with the parents, going to PTA meetings. They know. We just have a special bond, and I kind of miss that support.

Another reason parents resisted the transition was that it had symbolic meaning in terms of growing independence of their child. While some parents embraced this independence, others felt threatened because they felt their child would not need them as much.

It's always been, and I think that may have been one of my drawbacks for letting him go, making that decision to go to Chestnut. I wasn't sure because I don't want him to do everything for himself, but I know he has to because one day, mommy's not going to be there.

A motivating factor for transferring their child to an outreach class, despite their concerns, was the

desire for a more "academic" curriculum. All four parents of the children transferred to elementary schools articulated goals such as seeing their child learn to read or count. That was why they responded positively when they visited the outreach classes and saw what the students were learning. Parents described the activities at Battle Monument as "playing" because they did not understand the developmental appropriateness of play for learning concepts. Parents of the two older children articulated goals of social skill development and adjustment to the new class.

Once the child transferred to the outreach class, one of the biggest changes experienced by the parents was determining how to negotiate issues in a general education school. They had to determine how to communicate with special area teachers, counselors, and cafeteria workers about issues such as gym suits, paying for meals, attending field trips, and extra curricular activities.

These issues were especially salient in middle and high school because typically the non-disabled students are expected to handle these issues and communicate

with their parents. Margaret's parents and Tim's parents found that the school staff did not always realize their children were unable to communicate with them. The parents felt it was crucial for the school staff to "get to know" their child as quickly as possible, so they understood their capabilities and limitations.

In spite of the fears, concerns, difficulties faced during the transition, all the parents were pleased with the outreach classes and their decision to transfer their children. They saw their children forming friendships and relationships with other students in their classes, and their children appeared to be enthusiastic and excited about the new classes. Parents felt the classes were challenging their children both by the curriculum and the other students. They reported that the classes looked like what they thought a class should look like. They experienced positive and frequent communications with the receiving teachers, which they believed facilitated the transition.

Concerning the change in service delivery and

"inclusion", parents understand "inclusion" to be synonymous with mainstreaming. Certainly with the development of the outreach classes and the way inclusion is implemented in Baltimore County, this perception is reinforced by the school system. They believe the changes were made because of a "federal mandate" and because other systems across the country are including disabled students in regular classes, so that eventually Baltimore County would follow suit.

The parents recognized the discrepancy between putting their child in a self-contained outreach class and including them in regular classes. However, all the parents said they preferred having their child in a self-contained class. Their concern is that if the child is placed in a regular classroom, they will regress and lose skills they work hard to acquire, even if it limits their opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers. The parents believed that there should always be a range of educational options and services.

I also have to say that Margaret is in a self-contained classroom. She has very little contact with the rest of the

school population, the regular children. She is in what they call homeroom or homebase for ten minutes. That's the only time she is with the regular children. Margaret leaves like ten minutes before the classes, so that she is not in the hall during class changes. She goes into the cafeteria, but she goes in early before the children come in. They're kind of segregated to a table of other children of her same level. As far as I'm concerned, it's not much inclusion. It's just she's in a school with regular children. In a way it's not much different from over at Battle Monument. (And you prefer that?) Yes, I do. I think if they were trying to mainstream her in a regular classroom, I would be very upset.

Sending teachers' experiences and perceptions.

The six sending teachers described the positive aspects of the program they provide at Battle Monument

as "nurturing", "protective", and "supportive. They all felt that the strengths of a special center are the low teacher-to-student ratios, the constant availability of support and therapy services, and the opportunity to design highly individualized instruction for each child.

From the sending teachers' perspective, the greatest drawback to a special center program is the lack of opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers. They all felt that students in special centers do not get adequate modeling for language skills, social skills, academic skills, and appropriate behaviors. The sending teachers all reported that they observe more appropriate behaviors in their students when they participate in interactive programs with the regular education schools.

The sending teachers described many similar types of roles they play in the transition process, such as "coordinator", "facilitator", and "mediator" between the parents, Battle Monument staff, and receiving school staff. The sending teachers have the most intimate relationship with the child and parent than

does any other staff member, so they feel a sense of obligation as well as desire to support both the parent and student in this process.

Another key role sending teachers play is that of initiating the transition. Their decision to initiate the transition for a child is based on the interaction between factors intrinsic to the child and the factors intrinsic to the school system. The sending teachers examine how the child functions academically, behaviorally, and socially compared to the other students in their classes; whether or not they possess social and self-help skills necessary for a regular school environment; parent interest and receptiveness to the idea; and whether or not the student would continue benefitting from the program at Battle Monument. Initiating the transition is a difficult position and balance for them to maintain. As one teacher described it, "we have to be supportive without being pushy."

The sending teachers perceive the current state of "inclusion" in Baltimore County as being unprepared to meet the needs of many of their students. They have

experienced unsuccessful transitions and placements with previous students because the necessary supports, resources, and planning had not been in place. Thus, their decision to transfer a student is based on a "ready candidate model" that examines which students they believe will have successful transitions and placements based on what they know about the programs and how the current system is designed.

Everybody's ready, I guess he was ready to move taking into consideration the way the schools are right now. He was ready to make that move.

Five of the six sending teachers believe that the most severely disabled students should have the opportunities to benefit from less restrictive placements, but they would not risk a failed placement for fear of the effects it would have on the student and his or her family.

In terms of "inclusion" all sending teachers reported that the move towards it was based on a legal mandate. There was the perception that other states and districts have successfully included disabled students

in regular classrooms. Generally, they were not sure if they believed that all children could or should eventually be included in regular classes. They believed a range of placement options should be maintained. Interestingly, they felt that sending the child to his or her home school was an important goal to work towards because they felt it was important for the child to build relationships in the community. The sending teachers viewed the outreach classes as a valuable "stepping stone" or "bridge" to eventual regular classroom placements. One teacher described why the outreach classes make transferring these students to general education schools easier.

Honestly I think it's the transition from here to an outreach as opposed to from here to a regular class. I really think that's the bottom line. The children that move from here to a less restrictive special ed. then from there to a regular program. It's a stepping stone. And it's made it a lot easier. The people going in are comfortable, we're comfortable, the parent is comfortable,

it's not like throwing them to the wolves.

The aspects of the transition process the sending teachers found that facilitated it were good communication amongst all parties involved, and parental involvement and support. Barriers to the transition consisted of lack of preparation and training for the receiving teacher, lack of acceptance of the child by the receiving staff, and parental anxiety and resistance. They became frustrated when parental anxiety resulted in avoidant behaviors such as failing to attend meetings or visits after these parents had articulated the desire to explore other placements.

The sending teachers acquired their knowledge about programs and outreach classes primarily from previous experiences with transferring other students. They regret that they do not have the time allotted to do more exploration of the options through observations and meeting the staff at other schools. They feel they do not have knowledge to provide their families with the full range of possibilities available. Part of their decision to transfer a particular child to a

particular program is based on previous experience with the receiving school, teacher, other children in the class, and whether or not the sending teacher feels the receiving school could "handle" the student.

The sending teachers are still concerned that the child may remain somewhat isolated and have limited structured interaction with non-disabled peers. They are also concerned the child will not receive the full extent of the therapy services they need. These concerns are lessened with receiving staff with which the sending teachers have a developed a relationship.

#### Receiving teachers' experiences and perceptions.

In describing the outreach classes, the four receiving teachers emphasized the demands on the child to demonstrate independence and responsibility. The students must negotiate the demands of a larger physical facility as well as a significantly larger population. This provides opportunities to develop skills to "get along in the real world" as it is referred to by both receiving and sending staff. The receiving teachers view regular school as "highly structured" which is how special centers view

themselves.

When the receiving teachers refer to their programs as "highly structured" they mean the adherence to behavioral expectations and daily routine by all the students. When receiving teachers were asked what factors they consider regarding whether or not a child would experience success in their class, they emphasized appropriate behaviors, social skills, and ability to adjust to the transition. These issues were emphasized more frequently than academic skills or ability. The receiving teachers evaluate how certain behaviors would present safety risks in a large school.

In understanding the receiving teachers' perspective it is important to understand that they are not rejecting a student who presents challenging behaviors or instructional needs because they do not want to work with the student. The issue is that they feel insecure due to lack of experience, training, or resources to provide the student with the appropriate education. They feel that it is professionally irresponsible for them to attempt to educate students for whom they do not have the appropriate skills.

I don't care if she progresses as far as my other students because I know she won't. I know what her abilities are, and I expect my students to work to their abilities but not beyond. It is frustrating because I see what I can't do for her, and I wish I could, or I wish the resources were available to work more with her, or have someone else work more with her, with my planning or my doing the things and just having someone implement it would be nice.

Thus, the greatest concern expressed by all the receiving teachers was their inability to meet the students' needs, so they do not "fall through the cracks". In addition to not possessing the skills or having enough support in terms of additional personnel, other barriers to the transition process included starting the process late in the school year, parental resistance, and not being part of the process at decision making stages. Receiving teachers expressed the desire to be invited to ARD meetings as soon as the idea of transition to their school is raised with the

parent. By being part of the decision process, the receiving teachers understand the goals and objectives, as well as the hidden agendas, of transferring the child to an outreach class.

For example, the receiving teacher at Chestnut Elementary School did not know that Katie's mother initiated the transition and what her reasons were. Had the receiving teacher been part of the earlier process she would have understood that Katie was not transferred simply because school staff felt she was "ready for it". The teacher might then have been able to prepare and feel more ownership over the decision. As Tim's transition also demonstrated, the farther removed the receiving teachers are from the initial part of the process, the greater potential for confusion, poor communication, and differing expectations.

This was the primary difference between this transition process and the one described by Schattman (1992) in which the home school/receiving teachers were intensively involved in the entire process from the beginning. Their roles in that process included more

coordination, planning, and decision-making than was the case in this study.

The receiving teachers also felt that they would have benefitted from observing the child in the special center placement before the transition occurred. They would have an opportunity to evaluate setting differences and how environment might affect the child. Otherwise receiving teachers have only their class and the students in their class as a basis of comparison.

I would have liked to, I know the situation, that I was a new teacher coming in, so it would have been difficult, but it would have been nice if I had seen how these students acted in a different school for my own understanding of how they progressed.

This finding was confirmed repeatedly by my observations at the receiving schools. If I remarked to the teacher that the child appeared to benefit from the environment, they sometimes looked at me incredulously. Without the benefit of observing the child in both environments and observing the strengths and weaknesses of each, teachers base their judgements on how the

child performs only in their setting compared to other students who may have been there for a while.

Receiving teachers also expressed desire for sending teachers to become familiar with their classes and programs and to establish open and frequent communications with the sending teachers. In general receiving teachers saw and valued the benefits for disabled students to attend a general education school as well as espousing values to non-disabled students. There was a willingness, on their part, to accommodate any student as long as they could be guaranteed that appropriate supports, training, and resources were available.

#### Administrators' experiences and perceptions.

The administrators participation in this study differed greatly from other staff personnel who worked intimately with each student and family. By virtue of their role, all four administrators responded to questions from a more global, holistic perspective. They are the managers who examine how all the parts and players in a school are integrated and coordinated, so that they can make it run smoothly and efficiently.

They are less involved with the details of any particular case and more involved with the integrity of the overall program.

Thus, administrators described their role as facilitators who allow teachers and parents to make the decisions and lead the transition process. They provide the support, resources, and assistance with cases that prove difficult. All the administrators reported that it was crucial for the sending and receiving teachers to be directly involved in the critical aspects of the process.

I think it's real important, today when we had Mrs. C. go to the team at Battle Monument. In the past it's been myself. I wasn't available today, so we sent Mrs. C., but maybe in the future it should always be the teacher and not myself, or myself and the teacher, so I can handle the administrative business part of it, and she can work with the teacher to teacher part of it. With her being there she got first hand knowledge of the student, and the procedures, and the concerns, then

she was also able to schedule a time to meet with the sending teacher, so she could be a part of the plan that's being established.

In order to facilitate the process, administrators need to have openness to possibilities, but they also needed a philosophy about the programs in their buildings as well as about educating students with disabilities. While some administrators have a conceptualization more consistent with the inclusion model, others have a conceptualization consistent with the idea of mainstreaming where the child must be "ready for it". Another perspective lies somewhere in between which is that the system is not ready for these children and needs to make changes and accommodations.

I think it's going to be a gradual increase as far as other schools taking on more severe kids. And a lot of it has to do with the philosophy of the individual schools and the willingness and expertise of the receiving teacher to take on a child like that. You've got to have the right resources in place to make it successful. To just put

a child out because that child might be a good ambassador to represent special education isn't fair to the child. The adults have to get it right first and then the kid will be successful. But we can't leave it up to the kids to make it work.

Administrators who espouse any of these positions all feel that they are protecting the child and family from failure. Those administrators who feel more secure about taking a risk because they have experienced success in the past were more likely to espouse a more optimistic position. Those who have experienced negative transitions have difficulty understanding or imagining how other difficult transitions might be successful. They do not feel confident about their abilities to make these transitions successful.

#### Psychologist/Researcher.

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the instrumentation through which data is interpreted through a filter of his or her biases, perceptions, and philosophical orientation. Thus, as the lone researcher

on this study, it was important for me to examine my biases, perceptions, and philosophy to determine how they affected the collection and interpretation of data. If I had been an outsider to the setting, people, and issues that I studied, the necessity for self-examination might have ended there. However, I was not an outsider but a researcher who also functioned as the school psychologist in the process.

At the suggestion of my committee, I examined my dual roles as a researcher and as a psychologist involved in the process I was studying. My advisor, Dr. William Strein interviewed me prior to data collection while in my role as the psychologist examining the issues of one case. He also interviewed me again at the end of data collection to explore my perspectives on conducting a qualitative research study in my own backyard. I felt it was important to share my experiences and perceptions about how my role as the psychologist provided access, conflicts, and opportunities to conduct this study.

Conducting this study required a great deal of interpersonal involvement, energy, and stress,

particularly in the phases of data collection. I had to establish many relationships and develop rapport with the various people I wanted to observe and interview. These are referred to as entrance and accessibility issues. Thus, it meant attending the necessary meetings to introduce myself to key participants, introducing the plan several months before, making phone calls, and writing letters to explain what I wanted to do and why I wanted to do it.

There was an emotional difference for me between collecting data at the special center where I worked and gaining access to the outreach placements. I had already established comfortable relationships with teachers and staff at Battle Monument School. There was a sense that these teachers trusted me and felt relatively comfortable being honest about their feelings. They did not appear threatened when I came to observe their classes because this task was naturally part of my duties.

Thus, issues such as trust and rapport that I could take for granted at Battle Monument had to be developed with staff at other schools. I felt a need to

reassure people that information would be disguised, so that it would remain confidential. I also had to intuitively assess the situation and the people to determine where there would be obstacles. Most people I approached willingly participated. Some people refused to be interviewed but allowed me to observe and ask questions. Some people were willing to be interviewed but did not allow me to tape record the interviews. My strategy was to let the participants determine the conditions and collect whatever data was possible, then participants often gave me more opportunities for data collection once they knew me and trusted me.

My perception regarding why some people agreed to participate was that they could gain support and consultation from me as the school psychologist. I strongly felt that my role as the school psychologist provided me with access and opportunities to collect data that would not have been provided to an outsider because I had an established, legitimate role in the process. It did not appear unusual to the receiving teachers for "old" staff to follow-up on former students in their new placements. This was how

receiving staff conceptualized my study and their participation in it. This form of follow-up was more extensive than a simple phone to call to see how things were going.

Part of the difficulty this created for me as the researcher was that receiving school staff saw it as an opportunity to obtain consultation from me as the psychologist. In Tim's case my observations were utilized as feedback to the staff at Fairview High School as an observer who had seen Tim in both settings. The chairman asked me to attend the sixty day review and share these observations. I reflected on how this affected my research. My participation may have influenced the outcome of the transition at that particular time. Had this been an outcome study, it would have biased my results.

However, what I was studying were the hows and whys, so I felt that this more intensive level of participation allowed me to study other parts of the process I would not otherwise have observed. Gertrude McPherson in Small Town Teacher (1972) utilized participant observation to study what it was like to be

a teacher both from her own experiences as a teacher as well as the experiences of other teachers she observed. One of her difficulties was that her own emotional involvement made it difficult to sometimes record data accurately. Aware of these issues, I thought about what limits I needed to set in the best interests of the research. I decided that I would share my observations with parents, teachers, and staff if they were elicited, but I would not be involved in decision making or giving my opinion regarding a course of action at the outreach placements where other psychologists served those schools.

Since qualitative research is an interactive process between the researcher and participants, I also thought about what I was obligated to give to my participants, particularly the parents. The parents appeared to feel a sense of relief after talking to me, even though it was simply to answer questions from the interview protocol. For some parents this was a highly charged emotional issue and having the opportunity to talk to someone about it offered them needed support. Therefore, the research in some ways developed a role

for me as the psychologist to provide support and counseling to families during this process, beyond the typical role of providing the ARD team with psychological data about the child. There is a need to determine parents' concerns and communicating those issues with staff at both the sending and receiving schools. As noted previously, parent anxiety is often the biggest barrier in this process. Thus, an important recommendation to arise from this study is to provide counseling and support to families during the transition.

My goal as a researcher was to accurately reflect the voices of my participants and to develop concepts, description, and models from my data. I focused on the description Glesne and Peshkin provided as a "translator/interpreter" of the data. With that goal in mind, I saw my biases regarding inclusion and less restrictive service delivery were much more evident in my role as the psychologist than as the researcher. As the psychologist it was my job to discuss how I might predict a particular child would benefit from a particular situation. It is likely that information I

learned conducting the research may have affected my professional opinions. Thus, I believed that my role as a researcher affected my role as the psychologist rather than the reverse being true. I did not experience a change in my overall philosophy that educating disabled students in regular education schools is not necessarily good or bad, but it depends on the resources provided to insure effectiveness.

Thus, while I made an effort to consciously separate my dual roles, there was overlap between the roles which simultaneously created possible positive and negative effects on the research. The positive effects were that access and acceptance to gain information were probably enhanced by my being the psychologist. The negative effects were that it caused confusion in those participants who saw me primarily as the psychologist and wanted to utilize my services as such. However, the essence of qualitative, naturalistic inquiry is that one studies events and people in the contexts in which they happen without manipulating or excluding factors, but he or she analyzes them as part of the data and considers their

impact on the findings. Therefore my dual role was part of context in which the events of this study occurred.

#### Summary of findings.

The transition model used currently is a "ready candidate" model in which the sending teachers, parents, and/or support personnel determine whether or not a child would benefit from an outreach placement based on characteristics about the child and the current state of the system. Parents feel that they are the primary decision makers. They consider issues such as the disabilities of other children in the class, availability of peer models for language, and appropriate behaviors. Decisions regarding choice of placement are often based on subjective impressions of programs they visited. Whether or not the child would be attending his or her home school was not reported to be an important factor.

The parents' concerns included physical safety, ridicule by other students, loss of a community of supportive parents, and their child's ability to meet the demands of a regular school routine. Most parents recognized that the current placements did not

represent "inclusion" in the true sense of the word. However, they all preferred a self-contained class to a regular class as an option for their child.

The sending teachers acted as initiators and coordinators of the transition. They believed that all students should have the opportunity to participate in educational programs with non-disabled peers, but they felt most schools were not ready in a psychological and physical sense to educate severely disabled students. They felt the outreach classes acted as a bridge to inclusion.

The receiving teachers emphasized the need for the child to negotiate the demands of a larger, regular school. They emphasized social skills and appropriate behaviors more than academic skills or ability as criteria for a viable candidate. They were also concerned about their own lack of training to address the needs of the severely disabled child.

Administrators de-emphasized their role in terms of tasks or decision making in the process, but they emphasized their role in terms of philosophy, facilitation, and leadership. All participants reported

parental anxiety and resistance as a major barrier in the transition process. They reported open and frequent communication as a major facilitator in the process.

#### Conclusions about transition process.

One of the difficulties with the inclusion model is that it is counterintuitive to the idea of teaching a class. Both teachers and parents have difficulty conceptualizing how one teaches a heterogeneous class of students and addresses all of their needs simultaneously. They can envision presenting certain material through various techniques to a reasonably homogeneous group of students, but they cannot envision teaching different material to students whose abilities and skills range significantly. I believe this is the crucial issue in terms of redesigning the structure of schools, classrooms, and the teaching process. What school systems attempting to move towards an inclusive model will face is the changing the teachers' conceptualization of what it means to teach a class.

The outreach classes as they are currently designed continue to focus on the issues of categorizing children and developing separate programs

for them. The development of the outreach classes appears to have accomplished a couple of tasks. Many children, particularly younger children with relatively severe disabilities are being educated in regular schools rather than starting at special centers and having to earn their way out. It provides disabled children with some opportunities to interact with non-disabled and participate in more normal school experiences. Parents find the outreach class a more comforting option since the basic structure of the program, i.e., a self-contained classroom with a special education teacher and assistant, did not change during the transition. Teachers, administrators, and support personnel find it more comfortable because they have time to absorb some of the changes while the process continues to evolve.

The transition process from a special center to a general education school parallels the transition in Baltimore County Public Schools from a traditional model to an inclusion model. No one appears to know where the limits are, so they slowly and hesitantly take risks and push the expectations a bit further.

This research lends support to my assumption that success or failure of a transition results from the perceptions, expectations, and reactions of the participants and how they affect each other.

In the transition process, participants are highly dependent on others for mutual cooperation. One person can easily hinder the process but rarely are one person's efforts solely responsible for the transition's success. All participants emphasized open, honest, and frequent communication as the factors most necessary for facilitating the transition. In this process, the child who presents as the focus, is the least powerful and most vulnerable. Thus, in terms of our language and the way we describe failure, we should say "the transition failed" not "the child failed in the placement." The former clearly communicates that the participants in power were not or did not do enough to make the transition successful rather than implying that the child did something which made the transition fail.

Finally, in order for participants to collaborate effectively, it is important to understand their

feelings, perspectives, motivations, and experiences. This study has provided some insights into the perspectives of the parents, the teachers who transfer the child to an outreach class, and the teachers who teach the child in the outreach class. Hopefully, these insights gave the reader an empathic view of these peoples' experiences.

#### Limitations

In considering the limitations of this study, the reader should understand that the purpose of this study was to describe the transition process by way of illustration of six cases. Thus, the findings of this study are meant to provide insights and themes rather than definitive conclusions generalized to larger or different populations. Such was the reason that each case was described in detail. The reader must consider how the findings and issues discussed in this study apply to his or her situations and experiences.

With these thoughts in mind, some additional information provided here may be useful. In terms of the families participating in the study, all were Caucasian and four of the six parents interviewed were

single mothers of lower to middle socio-economic status. Thus, their experiences, perceptions, feelings, and decision making strategies may not be representative of other family constellations or socio-economic situations. As discussed in chapter three, these findings reflect views and perceptions of parents who were willing to participate in the study and in the process. It is possible parents who are less involved in the process may not share the same degree of anxiety or the same concerns articulated by the parents in this study.

The study was designed to examine cases in order to explore the interrelationships amongst participants and situations in each case. Thus, only a limited number of cases could be explored by one person in depth. This created greater limitations when analyzing the data by categories of participants such as parents, receiving teachers, sending teachers, and administrators. Although each participant was interviewed in some degree of depth, there were only four to six participants interviewed in each category.

It is always difficult to determine how many

participants should be interviewed versus how in-depth the interviews should be to feasibly provide quality data. I believe that there was sufficient data was collected, particularly since other data collection techniques were utilized. I recommend that the reader consider that limitation when reviewing the findings.

Finally there are the limitations that plague qualitative research conducted by one researcher such as the potential for bias. I feel that I have attempted to address the issues of bias by attempting to render an honest account of the data as my participants presented it to me. I attempted to present the findings in a descriptive, non-judgmental manner without unwarranted speculation.

### Recommendations

The first set of recommendations applies to the transition process and implementation of aspects that may enhance it based on the findings of this study. Since parental anxiety was determined to be one of the major barriers to the transition, the first recommendation is to provide parental support in a more systematic way. This is to address their anxiety,

concerns, and help them problem solve with issues related to the transition. This could be accomplished through either the school psychologist or guidance counselor.

Another barrier to the transition presented by the receiving teachers were that they were not always involved in the process early enough. The receiving teacher should be involved at decision making phase of process and invited to visit and observe the student in the special center placement in order to enhance ownership and develop communication.

The largest benefit of transferring students from a special center to a general education school is the opportunity for interaction with non-disabled peers. However, upon observation and reports by receiving teachers, there were not structured plans to ensure opportunities for interactions. Thus, the third recommendation is to plan and structure disabled students interactions or opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers, so as to maximize benefit once the students attend the outreach placements. This could be accomplished through arranging a peer or buddy system

with non-disabled peers, attending certain classes with non-disabled peers, so that both sets of students are integrated into an instructional experience, or facilitating play amongst disabled and non-disabled peers at recess.

One of the greatest concerns expressed by all participants was the concern that sufficient resources would not be available to receiving teachers. In order to ensure success of the transition/placement it will be necessary to develop clear plans to acquire resources that will need to be in place in the outreach class by the time the student transfers to the class. This could be accomplished through a planning meeting which includes teachers, administrators, and special education area coordinators to determine how resources will be funded and provided.

The next recommendation is for Battle Monument School staff to develop a follow-up mechanism for sending teachers, so they can learn which aspects of each child's transition were successful and which were not. One excellent suggestion that was presented to me by one of the sending teachers was to have the

receiving teacher send a brief note back to Battle Monument discussing the child's adjustment. I would expand on this suggestion by having them discuss the transition in terms of what was successful and what were hindrances.

All teachers emphasized the need to continue to provide training and inservice education for both regular and special education staff on educating students with disabilities. This should be an ongoing priority for the entire school system. Training should involve both exposure and awareness inservices to specific workshops and classes regarding augmentative communication, instructional and curriculum modifications, behavior management, and knowledge of various disabilities.

Sending teachers are the staff most intimately involved with the child and family. It is important for them to have sufficient knowledge about placement options in order to advise their families. Thus, sending teachers need opportunities to visit outreach programs and gain information about available options for their students. This might be accomplished during

professional study days.

If the goal is to eventually educate all or most children in their home school, then a starting goal at this point in the process might be to attempt to develop an outreach class in every elementary school, so that the student begins his educational career in his home school. The home school then takes ownership of the child from the beginning of his or her educational career. An additional benefit is that with the natural proportion of students with severe disabilities being low, outreach classes may not have to deal with overcrowding issues.

The second set of recommendations applies to further research in this area. This study, being exploratory in nature, only exposed some issues related to the transition process of students transferring to regular education settings. Thus, findings of this study should be replicated with other populations and/or settings, such as transferring disabled students into regular education classes to determine which findings are consistent across populations or settings.

A second research recommendation is to study some

of these issues related to transition with larger populations through more quantitative types of methodology such as questionnaires or surveys. This would allow for opportunity to generalize findings in the quantitative sense. For example, one could develop a questionnaire for parents of children with disabilities that examines their decision making strategies regarding placement options for their child.

Further research is also needed to evaluate specific programs or interventions designed to facilitate the transition process. For example, interventions designed to provide parents with greater support could be evaluated in terms of parental satisfaction with the process.

In this study, the transition's "success" was assessed through the subjective evaluations by the participants. A final recommendation for future research is to operationalize "success" in terms of some measures of the child's progress in the new program. Assessment of pretransition skills compared to posttransition skills might be accomplished through criterion referenced instruments designed to assess

progress of severely disabled children. One example of an instrument designed to be sensitive to small changes in skill performance is the Developmental Assessment for the Severely Handicapped (DASH) (Dykes, 1980).

## Appendix A

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Transition Process From Intensity V Educational  
Placements to Less Restrictive Educational Placements

As the parent of \_\_\_\_\_ I understand the purpose of the proposed study is to explore different perspectives of individuals involved in the transition of my child from Battle Monument to \_\_\_\_\_  
(name of school)

The study will be conducted by Colleen McCleary, School Psychologist at Battle Monument.

I understand that the procedures will consist of audiotaped interviews with myself, my child's teachers, administrators, and counselors, observations of my child in both school placements, and review of records.

I understand that all information collected in this study is confidential and that names will not be used to report findings. I also understand that all information collected will be used only for purposes of the study.

I understand that there is minimal risk to my child and that the risk of breach of confidentiality will be protected by not using my child's name in written reports or oral presentations. I also understand that the benefits accrued from learning about the transition process may provide useful information to the school system and may or may not have a direct impact on my child.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

I give my consent to participate in this study.

Principal Investigator: Colleen McCleary, School  
Psychologist

Battle Monument School  
7801 E. Collingham Drive  
Dundalk, Maryland 21222  
(410) 887-7267

Advisor: Dr. William Strein, University of Maryland  
(301) 405-2869

Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

## STAFF PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Transition Process from Intensity V Educational  
Placements to Less Restrictive Educational Placements

I understand that the purpose of the proposed study to explore the perspectives of individuals involved in the transition process from Battle Monument School to

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I understand that the procedures will consist of audiotaped interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors, observation of the child in both school placements, and record reviews.

I understand that all information collected in the study is confidential and names will not be used in formal reports or oral presentations. I also understand that all information collected will be used for purposes of the study only. I understand that the risk is minimal and that all efforts will be made to protect against the risk of breach of confidentiality. I understand that as a staff member I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time without penalty.

I understand that the benefits accrued from the study are providing information which will be useful to the school system and may or may not directly impact this particular child at this time.

I consent to participate in the study.

Principal Investigator: Colleen McCleary, School  
Psychologist

Battle Monument School  
7801 E. Collingham Drive  
Dundalk, Maryland 21222  
(410) 887-7267

Advisor: Dr. William Strein, University of Maryland  
(301) 405-2869

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

## LETTER TO ADMINISTRATORS

September 19, 1995

Dear Mr. G.

My name is Colleen Bachman, and I am the school psychologist at Battle Mounent School. I am conducting a study on the process of transferring students from an Intensity V setting to Outreach programs, as part of my dissertation. This study has been approved by the Baltimore County Public Schools, Department of Research and Student Evaluation and the University of Maryland, College Park.

Data collection involves observing the child in both the Intensity V setting and the Outreach placement, interviewing the students' teachers in both settings, and interviewing the parents both before and after the transition. Each interview takes approximately 30-45 minutes and can be scheduled at the staff members' convenience.

The student at Fairview that I would like to observe is Tim. I have obtained written permission from his mother. I have made arrangements to visit today through Mr. A. If you have any questions or objections, please do not hesitate to call me (x7267 or 7000). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Colleen McCleary Bachman  
School Psychologist

## Appendix D

## PRE-TRANSITION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What are the positive aspects of the current placement?
2. What are the negative aspects of the current placement?
3. Why was a change in placement initiated?
4. What do you identify as goals for the transition process?
5. What concerns do you have about the change in placement?
6. What do you view as your role in the transition process?
7. What do you think will be the easiest part of the change for you?
8. What do you think will be the hardest part of the change for you?
9. How do you feel about the upcoming change in placement?
10. What are your reactions to the overall process?
11. What factors do you believe will lead to a successful transition?
12. What factors do you believe will hinder the transition?
13. How will you know if the transition was successful?

## Appendix E

## POST TRANSITION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How do you feel about the transition?
2. What do you view as your role in the process?
3. What are the positive aspects of the new placement?
4. What are the negative aspects of the new placement?
5. What factors do you believe facilitated the process?
6. What factors do you believe hindered the process?
7. How do you feel that \_\_\_\_\_ dealt with  
the change? (child's name)
8. How do you feel that this change will affect  
\_\_\_\_\_ 's school experience?  
(child's name)
9. Were there any surprises or unexpected developments?
10. How do you feel the process could and/or should  
have been handled differently?
11. How will you know if the transition has been  
successful?

Appendix F

OBSERVATION SUMMARY SHEET

Location

Time: Start to End

Physical Description

Participants Observed

Activity (Activities) Observed

Observations: sequences, quotes, participants involved

Themes, Hypotheses, Interpretations

## Appendix G

## Archival Information Sheet

1. How did the child get placed at Battle Monument School?
2. What are the concerns about the child staying at Battle Monument?
3. What are the concerns about the child leaving Battle Monument?
4. What are characteristics of the alternative placements?
5. Documentation of tasks during the transition?
6. Who was involved in the process and what role did they play?

Appendix H  
Coding Scheme

General Codes

How Transition Process Occurred	TP
Roles	R
Concerns	C
Wants	W
Feelings	F
Program Descriptions	PD
Barriers	B
Goals	G
Tasks and Strategies	TS
Values	V
Home School	HS
Curriculum Issues	CU
Negotiating different school	NEG
"Ready For It"	RFI
Peer Modeling	PM
School Resources to Family	SRF
Teacher Experience and Training	TE
Regular School Issues	REG SCH
Inclusion Issues	INC

Decision Issues	DEC
Facilitated Transition	FAC
<u>Participant Codes</u>	
Sending Administrator	SA
Receiving Administrator	RA
Sending Instructional Personnel	SI
Receiving Instructional Personnel	RI
Support Personnel	SP
Parents	P

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