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**Using Post-School Status Data for Special Education Graduates
for Program Decisions**

by

Cinda Johnson

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Doctor of Education

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2000

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Abstract

**Using Post-school Status Data for Special Education Graduates
for Program Decisions**

Cinda Johnson

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee

**Professor Eugene Edgar
Department of Education**

Post-school status data have been collected for students in special education for policy purposes. Transition services were mandated as a response to these follow-up data. Yet there is little evidence that practitioners use these data to inform program decisions or modification.

This analysis examined the use of post-school follow-up data for special education graduates in five school districts using case study methodology. Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions and individual interviews.

Informants' preferences regarding data collection and dissemination included: (1) data should be "personalized" in order for practitioners to connect the numbers to their students and programs. This was described as "hearing the stories"; (2) data should be examined with colleagues in order to discuss and use these data for program evaluation and decision-making; (3) data should be presented in graphs rather than tables, and include a one-page summary of the local data.

Additional themes concerning policy and programs developed. These included:

(1) The low numbers of graduates in the district study were surprising and disturbing to the informants. These numbers were perceived as an indication of a high dropout rate for special education students. (2) The informants identified the lack of curricular options in the high school as an additional concern. These options included lack of vocational programs, lack of functional life skills programs for students with mild disabilities, and lack of work-based learning opportunities. (3) Credits and graduation requirements were described as having priority over transition services in planning a student's program. State academic standards and high stakes tests were described as increasing the tension between school reform efforts and transition services.

Recommendations from this study include implications for local school practices and policy regarding post-school status data and recommendations for further research.

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Chapter i

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

State and local school districts are in the midst of an effort to raise academic standards for all students (Riley, 2000). School reform efforts encompass high standards as well as performance indicators, high stakes testing and increased significance of data for public accountability (Hargreaves, 1997). Special education legislation supports these efforts in the recent changes of the reauthorized IDEA 1997, as the focus shifts from merely providing basic services to improving academic performance and educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

Nested within the environment of school reform is the additional goal of improving the post-school status of special education students. Washington State defines this goal in the second of four objectives outlined in the Washington State Special Education Biennial Performance Report (OSPI, 2000). The objective directs special education personnel to “improve the post-school performance of students receiving special education services” (OSPI, 1999, p. 1). Increasing post-school performance of special education students is defined in the areas of employment, enrollment in post-secondary programs, and connection to appropriate out of school adult agencies within six months of graduation.

Baseline data for this objective were established in a follow-up study conducted on the 1998 special education graduates in Washington State. The Biennial Performance Report states that this study “will be replicated in subsequent years to establish comparison data and measure the extent to which specific interventions have been successful” (OSPI, 1999, p.2). Collecting data on special education graduates is neither

innovative nor original, but suggesting that school district personnel increase the post school performance of their special education students may be both.

Post-school status data collected at the national level provided the initial impetus for transition policy and continues to provide a picture of life after high school for students with disabilities (Hasazi, Gordon & Roe, 1985; Mithaug, Horiuchi & Fanning, 1985; Sitlington & Frank, 1989; Affleck, Edgar, Levine & Kortering, 1990; Wagner, Newman, D'Amico, Jay, Butler-Naln, Marder & Cox, 1991). In response to these data, transition planning and services were mandated for students at age 16 with the intent of improving post-school outcomes for these youth (IDEA, 1990).

Transition legislation focuses on preparing youth with disabilities for life after high school. Transition services for students in special education are defined as an "outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities" (Individuals with Disabilities, 34 C.F.R. Section 300.18). Post-school activities include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, and independent living and community participation. Transition services are to be provided in areas of instruction, vocational education and training, and community experiences with intention to improve post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities.

School personnel have been aware of the existence of post-school outcome data, yet there is little evidence to suggest that these data are used to make program decisions at the local level. District personnel are now asked to increase the engagement rates of special education students in employment, post-secondary training, and linkages to adult service agencies, based on the post-school follow-up data. The state-adopted

performance indicators stop short of requiring local districts to collect post-school follow-up data, yet these state goals strongly imply that post-school follow-up data should be used for program evaluation and change (OSPI, 2000). The research and best practice literature recommends that post-school outcome data are important for purposes of program evaluation, planning and decision-making (Neel, Meadows, Levine & Edgar, 1988; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Furney, Hasazi, & Destefano, 1997). However there is little understanding of how or if school personnel are using follow-up data for making program decisions.

Post-school outcomes for special education students take on additional significance in the context of school reform and standards-based assessment. Transition policy historically has run parallel to school reform efforts, particularly in school-to-work legislation. With the added emphasis and consequences of high stakes academic testing, it is necessary to frame the special education performance objectives within the school reform movement. For example, the academic outcomes that are assessed on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), and the post-school outcomes of students in special education as defined in the Performance Indicators (OSPI, 1999) both affect practices in schools. In addition to assuring that special education students participate to the fullest extent possible in standards-based assessment, district personnel are now asked to increase post-school outcomes based on data collected in follow-up studies (OSPI,2000). It is unclear if teachers and administrators will consider the post-school outcomes in their efforts to meet the requirements of standards-based assessment, or if these data will be important to them in their daily work.

School reform policy, particularly standards-based assessment, appears to have a strong effect on curriculum, teaching strategies and program changes. It is important to know how post-school outcome data for special education students affects curriculum, teaching strategies and program change. This study may assist in understanding how school personnel use these data for program decisions, suggest recommendations for policy implementation, and inform future studies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to better understand the use of post-school data from special education graduates by school personnel in five school districts in Washington.

Research Questions

1. Who is examining these data?
 - 1.1. Who is making the decisions based on these data?
 - 1.2. Who do the district personnel identify, as other people who should, but did not, examine these data?
2. For what data formats do districts ask? For example, do they want these data by gender, disability, ethnicity, or other disaggregation?
 - 2.1 Are there other data that district personnel perceive they need to make program decisions?
 - 2.2 How can these data best be presented?
 - 2.3 Do district personnel prefer reports, visual presentations, tables, or other methods?
 - 2.4 Are there common data needs across the five districts?

- 2.5 Can a standardized data format be designed for use by all districts across Washington?**
- 3. How do district personnel, including administrators, coordinators and teachers in special education, use post-school outcome data on students in special education to make program decisions?**
 - 4. What program decision are made that are related to follow-up data that district personnel examined?**
 - 4.1 What program modifications are chosen based on these data?**
 - 4.2 What documentation is there that these program changes have been made?**

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

You can't improve something you can't measure. We have to create quality assessments that have a direct connection to the standards. If all of our efforts to raise standards get reduced to one test, we've gotten it wrong...All states should incorporate multiple ways of measuring learning...Every test should have as its ultimate purpose helping the child who takes the test. The child should feel challenged, not traumatized (Riley, 2000).

"Insist on real accountability for results," urged the U.S. Secretary of Education in his seventh annual State of American Educational address (Riley, 2000). Riley is referring to the nationwide effort to raise academic standards for all children. He continues his address by emphasizing that schools are to be held accountable for results, but those students must have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their competence. Riley concludes his address by stating that educators should rely on more than one measure to make a final decision on student achievement (State of American Education, 2000).

Post-school follow-up data of students with disabilities take on new significance as performance standards for all students are identified, measured and assessed in the environment of school reform. If high stakes testing measures academic competencies in the school reform arena, can post-school outcomes provide additional opportunities for students and schools to demonstrate competence?

The Division of Special Education Services in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is using both the academic performance and post school status of special education students as performance measures. Washington State has adopted

four main performance indicators for special education students (OSPI, 1999). The objectives are:

1. Improve the academic performance of students in special education;
2. Improve the post-school performance of students in special education;
3. Maintain the compliance protections for students in special education and utilize the results of compliance efforts to improve programs; and
4. Improve the performance of personnel assigned to special education at the local district level.

These objectives are aligned with nation-wide efforts to increase accountability by measuring performance outcomes. “Perhaps the most useful outcome of the biennial performance report is to encourage states to identify and commit to a set of measurable outcomes respecting special education. The four major objectives and subsequent performance indicators for each have clearly had that effect in Washington,” (OSPI, 1999, p.3). The first objective focuses on improving the academic performance of students in special education and uses the participation rate and scores of special education students in the 1998 statewide Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) as baseline data for future comparison. In addition to improving the academic performance of special education students, Washington State is committed to collecting, analyzing and disseminating measurable post-school outcomes for special education students as stated in the second objective. Therefore, follow-up studies are a key component of the special education state plan for improvement that is “data rather than perception driven” (OSPI, 1999).

Follow-up Studies

Subsequent to the implementation of Public Law 94-142 (1975) (mandating individualized, free, appropriate public education for students with disabilities) attention was paid to procedural compliance, and access to public schools for students with disabilities. In addition to focusing on access and compliance, several states began collecting data on the post-school status of special education graduates. While these state studies provided interesting data to the researchers involved, national data were needed to make national policies (Wagner, 1995). Under contract with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the U.S. Department of Education, SRI International began the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) of special education students in 1987 and completed the data collection in 1994. These data were significant to the formation of transition policy implemented in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1990.

The 1990 reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, now the IDEA, mandated transition planning for students beginning at age 16 and incorporated transition services into the Individualized Education Program (IEP). IDEA defines transition services as,

A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (34 C.F.R. Section 300.18).

The 1997 amendments to IDEA continue to focus on student outcomes and lower the mandatory age for transition planning to age 14.

Washington State has collected data on special education graduates since 1983 (Edgar, Levine, & Dubey, 1989). In a follow-up study known as the First Decade Study, data were gathered on a sample of 1985 and 1990 special education graduates and their non-disabled peers (Edgar, 1995; Levine & Edgar, 1995; Murray, Goldstein, Edgar, 1997). Most recently in Washington, data have been collected in the statewide follow-up study of the 1998 and the 1999 special education graduates (OSPI, 1999, OSPI, 2000).

Gathering data on the post-school status of special education students is receiving renewed interest in Washington State as outlined in the performance objectives in the Biennial Performance Report to OSEP (OSPI, 1999). Increasing post-school performance for special education graduates is the second of the 4 major objectives in this report. Each of the objectives is composed of a series of performance indicators. The performance indicators are to be used for annual comparison and program review. The performance indicators for Objective 2, which is to improve post-school performance by increasing the rate of students receiving special education who are: 1) enrolled in post-secondary education programs, 2) employed, 3) engaged in either employment and/or enrolled in postsecondary programs, and 4) connected with an appropriate adult agency (OSPI, 1999).

Data from these the three Washington State studies and data from the NTLS will be reviewed and compared.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the U.S. Department of Education contracted with SRI International to provide information to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and others in the special education community regarding the

transition of youth with disabilities from secondary school to early adulthood. SRI began the study in April of 1987 with a national sample of more than 8,000 youth from 300 school districts, representing the national population of secondary special education students. The outcomes discussed in this review from the NLTS concern the cohort of 1190 youth that had graduated June 1987. Data were collected from a few months after graduation to 2 years after the youth left high school.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) study was used as a comparison group of youth without disabilities. For this study, data from the 1979-1983 interviews were used. There were noncomparabilities such as: NLTS interviewed parents, NLSY interviewed youth; NLTS interviews took place in 1987, while NLSY data came from 1979-1983; and participants in NLTS were out of school from 2-24 months, which NLSY were out of school from 9-11 months.

Employment. For youth with disabilities, 46% were employed less than 2 years after high school as compared to 59% of non-disabled youth. Employment rates of students with learning disabilities was 59%, youth with serious emotional disturbance 41%, and youth with mental retardation 25% (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner, et al., 1993).

Post-secondary Education. Students with disabilities attended post-secondary school, particularly college, at rates that are substantially lower than youth without disabilities. For young people with disabilities, 14% had ever enrolled in a post-secondary school as compared to 53% of non-disabled youth within the same time frame. These figures reflect 13% of students with learning disabilities, 17% of students with

emotional behavioral disturbance, and 8% of students with mental retardation (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

Engagement. The NLTS did not report rates of engagement (employed and/or attending postsecondary training programs).

Adult Agency Connections. NTLS collected information on connection with only one agency, (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation), and found that 13% of students with disabilities made connections with vocational rehabilitation agencies; 10% for youth with learning disabilities; and 6% for students with serious emotional disorders (Marder, Wechsler & Valdes, 1993).

Washington State: First Decade Study

This study was designed to gather longitudinal follow-along data on two cohorts of graduates from three school districts in Washington State who graduated in 1985 and 1990. Data collected on the 1990 cohort of students with disabilities (N=163) and students without disabilities (N=181) 6 –12 months after graduation, were used for this analysis (Edgar, 1995; Levine & Edgar, 1995).

Employment. The employment rate for youth with disabilities was 53% as compared to 61% of youth without disabilities. Employment rate for youth with learning disabilities were 62%, for youth with emotional behavioral disorders, 57%; and for youth with mental retardation, 25%.

Post-secondary Education. The rate of attendance at postsecondary school for youth with disabilities was 36% as compared to 73% for youth without disabilities. Attendance rate for youth with learning disabilities was 34%, for youth with emotional behavioral disorders, 43%; and for youth with mental retardation, 33%.

Engaged in Employment and/or Post-secondary Education. Rates of engagement (working and/or attending employment or post-secondary education) were 76% for youth with disabilities and 98% for youth without disabilities. Engagement rates were 84% for youth with learning disabilities; 86% for youth with emotional behavioral disorder; and 54% for youth with mental retardation.

Adult Agency Connection. Data specific to connection to adult service agencies post high school were not collected in the Decade Study.

Washington State 1998 Post-school Status Study.

Data were collected in November and December 1998 (six months after graduation) for 545 special education youth from 31 schools across Washington. Data were not collected for graduates without disabilities in either the 1998 or 1999 follow-up study.

Employment. The rate of employment was 66% for the special education graduates in this study. For youth with learning disabilities, 78% were employed; 46% of youth with emotional behavioral disorders; and 42% of youth with mental retardation.

Post-Secondary Education. Overall, 31% of special education graduates were attending some type of post-secondary education program. For youth with learning disabilities, 34% were attending post-secondary training; youth with emotional behavioral disorder, 46%; and youth with mental retardation, 3%.

Engaged in Employment and/or Post-Secondary Education. Of the graduates in the 1998 study, 77% were engaged in employment and/or post-secondary education. For those with learning disabilities, 57% were engaged; 69% of youth with emotional behavioral disorders; and 13% of youth with mental retardation.

Adult Agency Connection. Of these students, 33% had made a connection with an adult service agency.

Washington State 1999 Post-School Status Study.

Data were collected in November and December 1999 (six months after graduation) for 540 special education youth from 27 schools across Washington. School personnel collected these data through telephone interviews. The same protocol was used as the 1998 study and analyzed by OSPI (OSPI, 1999).

Employment. The rate of employment was 70% for the special education graduates in this study. Youth with learning disabilities were employed at the rate of 79%; youth with emotional behavioral disorders, 38%; and youth with mental retardation, 51%.

Post-Secondary Education. Overall, 30% of special education graduates were attending some type of post-secondary education program. Youth with learning disabilities were attending at the rate of 28%; the rate was 33% for youth with emotional behavioral disorders; and 4% for youth with mental retardation.

Engaged in Employment and/or Post-Secondary Education. For special education graduates in the 1999 study, 81% were engaged. For youth with learning disabilities, 88% were engaged; for youth with emotional behavioral disorders, 63%; and for youth with mental retardation, 54%.

Adult Agency Connection. The rate of engagement for 1999 special education graduates in connecting to an adult agency was 34%.

Conclusion on Follow-up Studies.

Data for these studies provide a reasonable baseline of post-school performance for youth with disabilities. Table 2.1 presents these four studies and the four outcomes.

Table 2.1. Comparisons of Four Studies: NLTS, Decade, 1998 Washington State Post-school Status Study, and 1999 Washington State Post-school Status Study.

| Outcomes | Studies | NLTS ≤ 2 years | DECADE 6-12 months | 1998 WA 6 months | 1999 WA 6 months |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Postsecondary | | | | | |
| | Non-disabled | 53% | 73% | | |
| | Total disability | 14% | 36% | 31% | 30% |
| Employment | | | | | |
| | Non-disabled | 59% | 61% | | |
| | Total disability | 46% | 53% | 66% | 70% |
| Engagement | | | | | |
| | Non-disabled | | 98% | | |
| | Total disability | | 76% | 77% | 81% |
| Agency Connection | | | | | |
| | Total disability | | | 33% | 34% |

Using Data for Program Evaluation and Decision-making

Legislation has been enacted reforming general education in general and proffering the idea that public education reforms are meant to benefit all students, including students with disabilities. Reform policy has the objective of producing improved student outcomes through the assessment of those outcomes. “You can’t improve something you can’t measure” (Riley, 2000).

Data regarding the post-school status of youth with disabilities at the national level has been used for evaluation and decision-making. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) provided data depicting youth with disabilities faring less well than youth without disabilities in rate of employment or postsecondary training after high

school. These data were used to justify mandatory transition planning for students with disabilities in the reauthorization of IDEA.

IDEA 1997 reflected the influence of the standards-based reform movement by requiring that IEPs show how students with disabilities will progress toward the same high standards to which other students must achieve. IDEA specifies that schools must direct their efforts toward improving student outcomes, by including that a planning process is in place to work toward positive post-school outcomes. The effectiveness of these plans and subsequent programs are to be judged by the success that students with disabilities have in meeting standards within their state and local districts, as well as by their success in post-school life (DeStefano & Wermuth, 1992; Morningstar, Kleinhammer-Tramill, & Lattin, 1999; Turnbull, Bateman, & Turnbull, 1993).

Federal discretionary funds have supported transition efforts, serving as a catalyst for developing conceptual models for transition and implementing these models. In 1989 federal funds allocated for Systems Change Grants in transition involved a commitment of approximately \$2.5 million over five years to each state. Washington State received these federal dollars in 1990 through 1995, and worked to improve statewide transition services and increase positive post-school outcomes for special education youth.

Post-school outcome data for students with disabilities appears to have influenced state as well as federal policies. In the On-Site Compliance Review Final Report to OSPI following the 1998 federal monitoring of special education programs, OSEP referenced post-school outcomes for students with disabilities in the opening paragraph of the transition section (OSPI, 2000). The transition section of this report begins by reporting employment rates from the NLTS for special education graduates as compared to youth

in the general population. The report continues, “The Study (NLTS) also shows that post-school success is associated with youth who had a transition plan in high school that specifies an outcome, such as employment, as a goal” (OSPI, 2000, p.30). In partial response to the special education monitoring, the special education office of the OSPI has created policy that commits to systematically collecting data in which to measure post-school outcomes for students with disabilities as a performance objective.

Although follow-up data has influenced policy at the federal and state level, local administrators, teachers and staff are encouraged to use outcome data to evaluate programs and services, and to change targeted programs as needed (Affleck, Edgar, Levine, Kortering, 1990; Blackorby, Edgar, & Kortering, 1991). These data should be used to “evaluate our efforts, define our programs, and monitor the effectiveness of our human service system” (Edgar, 1985, p.43). It is recommended that schools be held responsible to develop and administer data collection systems in order to better meet the needs of special education students (Furney, et al, 1997; Hasazi, et al, 1985; Hasazi, et al, 1989; Johnson & Rusch, 1993; Neel, Meadows, Levine, & Edgar, 1988; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). A critical aspect of successful transition planning is a statewide measure of post-school outcomes that local practitioners can use to evaluate and improve current programs (Furney, et al, 1997).

Post-school outcome data were used to justify personal futures planning, self-determination skills, community-based wraparound social services, competitive employment, and flexible educational programs for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (Bullis & Cheney, 1999). In addition to using the available post-school follow-up data to identify promising practices, outcome data were collected on the

participants to further refine programs for students with EBD. Reviewing these data allowed the program staff to inspect its own work and its effects, which is essential to examine the relationships of services to program outcomes (Bullis & Cheney, 1999).

Although understanding of the relationship between best practices and student outcomes is in the beginning stages, future research directions should include examining these best practices and the impact upon post-school outcomes for students with disabilities (Johnson & Rusch, 1993; Sale, Metzler, Everson, & Moon, 1991).

School Reform and Performance Outcomes

Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people (NCEE, 1983).

This, from A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983), published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, was a catalyst for school reform, establishing high academic standards and the proposed transformation of the entire education system based on those standards.

Standard-based reform of the entire education system has been accepted at the national level unlike other ideas since the equity concepts that were broadly adopted in the 1960's (Jennings, 1995). Led by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, the equity movement led the nation to act on the belief that schools must be more accessible for all students, providing access to public schooling for the poor, disabled, limited-English and others at risk of failure. Various programs were ratified to support the education of these students including Head Start, Title I, The Bilingual Education Act, and the Education of All Handicapped Children Act. These and other state and local programs resulted in

American schools that were more open to all children; in part, solving the problem of access.

Attention shifted from questions of access to questions of quality, asking if all children were receiving the best possible education. In the mid- to late-1970's states enacted laws requiring students to pass minimum competency tests in order to graduate from high school (Jennings, 1995).

Despite the efforts to improve academic outcomes, these concerns were crystallized in the release of A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983). This report was prepared by a prestigious committee chaired by then Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and subsequently endorsed by President Reagan. In A Nation at Risk, it was reported that academic achievement had drastically declined as demonstrated in reading, writing and math scores from 1963 to 1980, and suggested that the bar should be raised even higher (NCEE, 1983). The report further stated that the high school curriculum was not stringent enough and had low requirements for graduation.

In addition to broad concern and belief that academic scores were declining, there was a shift at the national level on the principle that the nation and the states must have broad agreement on what students should know and be able to do. This is in sharp contrast to past belief in local control. Local public schools have been able to define what should be taught in their schools and what students should know. Major education organizations, major business groups, the nation's governors, and the president were advocating the concept of national standards defining what children ought to know (Jennings, 1985).

Evidence was also accumulating in the 1980's that American education was failing a large portion of our youth, particularly non college-bound students (Gant Foundation, 1988). There were several indicators showing a widening gap between workers who were well-educated and those who were not; the many years young people with only a high school diploma move between low-wage, low-skill jobs; and the lack of employment for many inner-city minority youth (Gant Foundation, 1988; NCEE, 1983).

There were critics of the reform movement that questioned the "myth" of poor schools and outcomes, suggesting that the research was flawed, intentionally manufacturing a crisis, and creating a conspiracy to keep voters focused on schools rather than government and corporate policies that have an impact on the economy (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Schneider and Houston, 1993). Even though there were doubts about the conjecture of declining academic scores, the standards-based reform movement received broad-based political support and acceptance at the national level (Jennings, 1995; Morningstar, et al, 1999).

The idea and acceptance of the federal government having a role in providing support and services for special needs children and other problems of access gradually moved toward the idea that the national government had a legitimate concern about the general state of education. This concept was not without tension and not all governors supported the idea of expanding the federal governments influence on education (Boehner, 1985). The idea of standards was to focus educators' on what is essential to teach, which in turn would instigate systems-changing reform across the nation (Hill, et al., 1997).

As a response and a commitment to the clamor for educational reform Goals 2000: Educate America Act, was passed on March 31, 1994. The Clinton initiatives were rooted in the Bush legislations' summit conference held in 1989. Then Governor-Clinton participated as the governors and the President agreed on the concept of national goals for education, the first ever devised (O'Day, 1985). Goals 2000 legislation requires an educational system that is standards-driven. The policy clearly establishes the need for well-defined academic standards for all students and a system of standards, assessment, and certification for the identified skills.

Reform efforts prevail, with states across the nation addressing the issue of improving and assessing academic standards (Riley, 1999). School reform policy proposes that once there is agreement on what students should know and be able to do, then the system should be oriented to achieving those ends. Standards-based school reform policy proposes that there is agreement on the academic goals. Schools then will choose the best methods to help students master the identified skills and academic competencies; thereby aligning teaching, assessment, textbook choice and professional training to those goals (Jenning, 1995).

Washington State Response

The legislature finds that student achievement in Washington must be improved to keep pace with societal changes, changes in the workplace, and an increasingly competitive international economy. This policy proposes that a public school system be developed that focuses on performance and high expectations for all students (ESHB 1209).

The Washington State Legislature adopted the Education Reform Act of 1993, (ESHB 1209), establishing common learning goals with the intention of raising academic standards and student achievement for all Washington students.

Aligned with federal policy, ESHB 1209 defines student outcomes, yet is more flexible in defining how instruction is to be provided. The academic standards are broadly defined in the four basic education goals:

1. Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
2. Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness;
3. Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and
4. Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) were established from these four goals. The EALRs specifically describe what all students should know in eight content areas. The content areas are reading, writing, communication, mathematics, science, social studies, arts and health and fitness. These standards have been clear targets for students and teachers across the state for improving student performance.

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is the assessment system designed to determine the extent to which students are achieving the knowledge and skills defined by the EALRs. The assessment for reading, writing, mathematics, and communication have been developed at Grades 4 and 7 and were operational as of spring,

1998. The Grade 10 assessments in these same content areas were operational in spring, 1999. Middle and high school assessment in science was piloted in spring, 1999 and operational in spring, 2000.

The stated purpose of standards-based assessment is to improve instruction for all students, not to penalize students who are not at the standard (OSPI, 1999). The policy acknowledges that students in special education have been exempted at high rates from state-level assessment in the past and should be included in the WASL in order to gather important information about their academic progress and assure that these students are not excluded from the benefits of educational reform. Guidelines for providing accommodations for students with special needs have been developed to encourage their inclusion in state-level assessment (OSPI, 1999).

Once the EALRs and standards are fully in place, graduating seniors will be required to earn a Certificate of Mastery. The Certificate will provide evidence that students have met the standards set for the Grade 10 assessments. The Certificate of Mastery is to be coupled to the diploma as a high school graduation requirement beginning with the graduating class of 2008.

Activities around standards-based assessment occur at the state, regional and district level. At the state level, the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission, known as the A+ Commission, has been created to lead the efforts toward accountability. Successful school criteria are to be recognized by two types of accomplishments, student achievement and improvements in student achievement as measured on the WASL. Improvements include those measured by meeting the standard or the improvement of the standard, despite challenges such as large number of special

populations, including students in poverty, high levels of mobility, English as a second language and students with disabilities. If a school is shown to need assistance, there is a graduated series of increasingly intensive state intervention strategies for schools and school districts in which low-performance persists over an identified period of time. At this point, the commission can use multiple sources of information that may include attendance, dropout rates, graduation rates, and post high school indicators (SSB 5418, Sec. 1, 1999).

Training and presentation at conferences and institutes in every corner of Washington address school reform and the WASL. The Superintendent of Public Instruction in Washington State is a leader in sharing the information about school reform. Bergeson's final address to the State in 1999 culminated her discussions over the year, "We must have clear learning targets... The WASL is a measure of how schools are making progress" (OSPI, State Address, 1999).

Student Learning Improvement Grants (SLIG) are available to provide funds that assist teachers to help students reach the new standards (OSPI, 2000). School district personnel have taken advantage of these monies to prepare for higher standards for all students as measured by the WASL.

Current Special Education Policy: Post-school Standards

School district personnel in Washington are asked to help students succeed in high-stakes tests, pass high school exit exams and increase positive post-school outcomes for their students in special education in areas of employment, enrollment in post-secondary education and linkages to adult service agencies. The goal, as stated in the OSPI Performance Indicators is to "Improve the post-school performance of students

receiving special education services”, based on data collected in the 1998 post-school follow-up study (OSPI, 1999). Indicators for this objective are:

1. Increase the rate of students receiving special education services who enroll in post-secondary education programs within six months of graduation.
2. Increase the rate of students receiving special education who are employed within six months of graduation.
3. Increase the post-secondary engagement rate (employed and enrolled in a post-secondary program) within six months of graduation.
4. Increase the rate of students receiving special education who are connected with an appropriate out of school agency within six months of graduation.

In light of the context of assessing academic achievement and post-school outcomes as a measure of success for students as well as school districts, there is a need to understand what is occurring inside of districts, beyond the policies and aggregated data. Information needs to be gathered from within schools, looking carefully and deeply at specific cases.

Case Study Research

Case study research is the ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1993; Stake, 1995; Cresswell, 1998). Case study methodology is most conducive to the research questions put forth in this study. Case study research is focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied, in this case, school personnel, and offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base

and practice of education (Merriam, 1988), particularly when using a rigorous approach with systematic procedures.

Case study is a research design in its own right. Merriam (1988) considered case study research a methodology, while Stake (1995) considers the “case” as the object of study rather than particular methodology. Case study research uses qualitative and quantitative approaches, often combining the two (Tashakkor & Teddlie, 1998; Yin, 1993). There is general agreement that case study research includes a detailed description of the case as it emerges, analyzing the issues within the context and, finally, interpreting the findings.

Yin defines the case study method as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, addresses a situation in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and uses multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 1989, p. 33).

Case studies vary in terms of both the design and the end product. Case studies can be exploratory, descriptive, interpretive or explanatory, as well as evaluative (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Most are a combination of these methods. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define the aspects of case study research as: 1) defining the problem, 2) identifying and describing the context, 3) identifying and discussing the issues, and, 4) defining the lessons learned.

Importance of Context It is the real-life context that provides case study research both a source of richness and cause for uncertainties. The richness of the context in case study methodology reveals an understanding of people as they engage in action as well as interact with the phenomenon within the context of the situation in their own setting; in

this study, the high schools. The importance of understanding and accounting for contexts is considered critical, driving the way we understand the meaning of events (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Case study research furthers an understanding of human behavior, leading to better understanding of how an intervention may affect behavior in a particular situation (Collins & Noblit, 1978).

This attention to context is crucial in the effort to understand the use of post-school follow-up data by school personnel. The attention to context is an intensive part of the study. Considerable time is spent describing the context for the case (Cresswell, 1998). The amount of description, analysis and summary materials can be constrained by a bounded system. The bounded system is bounded by time and place; and is the case being studied, a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. In a multi-case study, the context of the case still involves situating the case within its setting, bounding it within the timeframe and the policy; in this case, the event of post-school follow-up data collection and dissemination.

Although the context is critical to the case study, it is because of the context that a major problem arises. Concern with the context introduces a large number of variables into the study. The variables of the setting are so numerous that the traditional experimental design in which the context is “controlled” for variables is not possible. The number of variables exceeds the number of data points. Therefore, the critical aspect of case study research is the use of multiple sources of evidence, which converge on the same set of issues (Cresswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Yin, 1998.)

Multiple Sources Of Data. Extensive, multiple sources of information in data collection provide the rigor that is crucial to case study research. Multiple data sources provide a detailed, in-depth picture through the use of interviews, both group and individual; documents, audio and visual materials; field notes and journal notes; and observation. As the description of the case emerges, the researcher can begin the process of data analysis, interpretation and finally, assertions about the case.

Combining data sources to study the same social phenomenon is a concept known as triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Stake, 1995). Data triangulation helps to support the development of patterns, and aids in substantiating interpretation or meaning from the data. Using three or more sources in data triangulation provides the opportunity to see if what is observed and reported carries the same meaning under different circumstances. The opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection is a major strength of case study research.

Analyzing Data. Data analysis in case study research is an ongoing activity but becomes intensive when all the data are in (Merriman, 1988). Data must be analyzed as they are collected, in order to narrow the study to a point that is manageable within the time and funding constraints. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations (Stake, 1995).

The development of a typology of categories or themes is the essence of data analysis in case study research. There seems to be some regularity in the numbers of categories that arise from this analysis. From initial data sets with 200 or fewer units of information, gathered from open-ended questions, 10 to 15 categories typically emerge. Developing more inclusive definitions and combining similar groups generally reduce

this number from six to eight (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Perhaps this is partially due to “the limit in the capacity that we, as a species, have for understanding the complexities of any topic” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 119).

Case study data analysis makes use of categorical aggregation. By aggregating instances, it is possible that something can be said about them as a class. This clumping of instances into organizational matrices lead to interpretation of the data (Stake, 1995).

The strategies used in grounded theory for analyzing data are helpful in case study research. Although there should be a good working knowledge of previous research literature on the topic that is investigated, this knowledge should not shut out emerging categories that may develop (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The strategies of breaking down, conceptualizing and reconstructing data may provide the answers to the questions posed by the study.

Analyzing data along the inductive-deductive continuum ranges from the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to the use of a priori matrices suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). An initial pilot study is helpful in providing broad a priori matrices to subsequent case study research while still making use of the benefits of the constant comparative method to develop emerging categories from a mass of narrative data (Stake, 1995).

With multi-case studies, there is both within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Patterns are identified within a single case, perhaps suggesting unique themes to a case. Each case within a multi-case study is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself, learning as much as possible about the contextual variables within the case.

The cases are examined in an effort to identify patterns across cases, common to all. The purpose of cross-case analysis is not necessarily to increase generalizability but rather to serve as a means by which the researcher can test the soundness of conclusions, observations or assertions made in case descriptions and to aid in the explanation of the underlying theory of action (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Cross-case analysis seeks to build “a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, 1994, p. 108).

Matrices developed from cross-case analysis represent majority opinion within each case. Cross-case analysis assists to deepen understanding and explanation, built upon examination of similarities and differences across the cases. Yet, caution is needed. By aggregating or averaging results across cases, there is more opportunity for misinterpretation and superficiality.

Summary

Legislation reinforces the concept that educational reforms are meant to benefit all students, including students with disabilities. School reform policy not only has the objective of producing improved student performance, but also requires the collection of data on the results of these efforts. There is a flurry of activity in the context of the school reform movement to identify databases that will help monitor progress toward goal achievement. Post-school status data for students with disabilities is another measure of competencies in the standards-based reform movement. If students are to have multiple opportunities to demonstrate competencies, perhaps these should include more than academic outcomes, particularly for students with disabilities in academic areas.

Post-school follow-up data on the status of youth with disabilities has led to changes at the federal level. Now, it appears that follow-up data on the status of special education graduates may well become a standard for measurement and evaluation of state special education programs. The state special education goals, defined by the OSPI in the Biennial Performance Report, aim at improving the post-school status of special education.

It is not enough to merely collect data; it must be descriptive and useful (NCEO, 1995). Both post-school status data and standards-based assessment data have been used in policy decisions, from top down in the educational organization, yet it is unclear how individuals in local educational agencies are using data. With an increased emphasis on post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities and the efforts to collect post-school status data, it is particularly important to know how school personnel use these data, particularly for program evaluation. Case study methodology provides the means to probe into the context of the schools, and listen to the practitioners use their own language to bring meaning to the research questions and assist in conceptualization of the problem of this research.

Chapter Three

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine how school districts use post-school follow-up data on special education graduates to make program decisions. A multiple descriptive case study was employed to investigate the use of post-school outcome data of 1999 special education graduates by school personnel in five school districts across Washington.

Research Questions

1. Who is examining these data?
 - 1.1. Who is making decisions based on these data?
 - 1.2. Who does the district personnel identify as other people who should, but did not, examine these data?
2. For what data formats do districts ask?
 - 2.1. Are there other data that district personnel need to make program decisions?
 - 2.2. How can these data best be presented?
 - 2.3. Are there common data needs across the five districts?
 - 2.4. Can a standardized data format be designed for use by all districts across Washington?
3. How do district personnel, including administrators, coordinators and teachers in special education, use post-school outcome data on students in special education to make program decisions?
4. What program decision are made that are related to data that district personnel examined?

4.1. What program modifications occur based on these data?

4.2. What documentation is there that these program changes have been made?

Sample

Settings

The five school districts selected to be members of this sample were participants in the statewide post-school follow-up study of 1999 special education graduates. Four of the school districts had participated in the 1998 study.

The five school districts are described in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1. Demographics for Five School Districts.

| Demographics: | Oakfield | Crest | Cherry | Falcon | Creekview |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Location | Northeast | North | West | South | East |
| School Population | 4,679 Suburban | 21,704 Suburban | 22,008 Suburban | 18,212 Suburban | 32,553 Urban |
| Special Education Population & % | 559 12% | 2,656 12% | 2,379 11% | 2,115 11% | 3,871 12% |
| 1999 Non-handicapped Graduates | 296 | 1111 | 1117 | 863 | 1830 |
| 1999 Special Education Graduates | 19 7% | 51 5% | 61 6% | 65 8% | 91 5% |
| Contact for Study | Director | Director | Director | Director | Secondary Director |
| Students of Color | 0% | 22% | 20% | 23% | 10% |
| Male Students | 64% | 74% | 67% | 60% | 58% |

Participants.

Participants of this study were selected by the special education director in each of the five sites and consisted of:

1. administrators (including special education directors and high school principals

2. coordinators (secondary special education coordinators, transition coordinators and department chairpersons)

3. special education teachers (See Table 3.2).

All of the participants attended a focus group meeting held in the district. Persons representing each of the three groups were selected for individual interviews. A total of 62 people participated in this study, including: 11 administrators, 10 coordinators, and 41 teachers.

Table 3.2. Participants by Setting.

| Setting | Administrator | Coordinator | Teacher |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|---------|
| Oakfield | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Falcon | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| Creekview | 5 | 2 | 17 |
| Crest | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Cherry | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 11 | 10 | 41 |

Procedure

This study describes the use of post-school outcome data by personnel in five school districts in Washington. Post-school data from these 5 districts were collected in November 1999 on special education students that graduated or aged out in the spring of 1999 as part of a larger statewide project, (OSPI, 1999). These data were presented to focus group meetings held in the 5 sites in January and February 2000. The focus group

met for an average of 2 hours. An agenda of the focus group meeting is included in the appendices (Appendix A).

Following the initial presentation of the post-school follow up data to the focus groups, three individuals from each of the districts were individually interviewed 4-6 weeks after the focus group meeting in a semi-structured interview.

The focus group meeting and the subsequent individual interviews provided data from 6 primary data sources. These were:

1. Written questionnaires by each focus group participants.
2. Notes of the focus group interview and discussion.
3. Audio tape recording of focus group discussion.
4. Notes from individual interviews at each district.
5. Documentation of program changes.
6. Second source interview data for program change verification.

Data Collection

Data tables were developed for each district using the 1999 Washington State post-school follow-up study (Appendix B). The post-school follow-up data were presented to each focus group in a slide presentation. The participants had copies of the presentation (Appendix C) and the data tables. After the presentation of the follow-up data, the participants completed a questionnaire (Appendix D). Following the individual written responses to the questionnaire, each question was presented to and discussed by the focus group. This discussion was recorded by a note-taker and audiotape recorded.

The three key individuals from each focus group were identified by the special education director at each site and represented the 3 levels identified in the focus groups

(administrator, coordinator, special education teacher). Individual interviews were conducted 4 – 6 weeks following the focus group meeting. The protocol used for the individual interviews is found in Appendix E.

Evidence of program modifications was solicited in the individual interviews. Activities reported by the participant were verified through second person confirmation of decision-making or modifications and documentation.

Data Analysis

Within-Case Analysis. The focus group meeting provided data from the written questionnaires, and notes and audiotape recording of the discussion. These data were reviewed and written on an initial contact summary sheet. Data from the individual interviews were reviewed and summarized around the questions. When all the data were collected, data from each case were inspected and assigned to matrices for within-case analysis. Although ongoing data analysis occurred throughout the study, the data were searched for patterns and regularities, which were transformed into categories. Written responses to the questionnaire were again reviewed, as were the notes taken by the note-taker. The tape-recorded discussion was reviewed in order to enhance and clarify the notes and quotes of the participants.

Cross-Case Analysis. Following individual case description, the data were examined across the five cases to discern patterns or regularities, which were sorted into categories. A systematic comparison across the cases occurred after each case was well understood. The research questions were used as a framework to facilitate a process to select critical data. In addition to using the research questions to conceptualize the data, categories also developed from item frequency.

The data analysis used the multiple data sources to provide the details that supported the emerging patterns and to provide depth to the cases. This information included questionnaires, focus group discussion, individual interviews, notes, audiotapes, documents and second source verification. The triangulation of these data helped to support the development of themes.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented first as a within-case analysis for each of the 5 school districts and conclude in cross-case analysis. In following the tradition of case research report writing, ordinary language and narratives will describe the cases, using ample but non-technical description (Stake, 1995, Merriam, 1988).

Within-Case Results for the Five School Districts

The data was gathered in each district from written questionnaires, focus group discussion and individual interviews.

The participants completed the written questionnaire (Appendix D), after viewing the presentation of the follow-up data in the focus group meeting. The questionnaire addressed the participants preference for data format, presentation of the data, most and least important data, people identified as needing to see these data, and data use. These questions were used to structure the focus group discussion, but did not limit the topics that were discussed. The questions also provided the framework for the within-case analysis.

Additional themes developed from the focus group discussion. The participants of the focus group were asked to discuss each of the questions from the questionnaire, but were not bound to those topics.

Four to six weeks after the data were collected at the focus group meeting, interviews were conducted with three to four individuals in each district. The interviews focused on the questions, “ How do district personnel use post-school outcome data on

students in special education to make program decisions?” and, “What program decisions were made that are related to follow-up data that district personnel examined?”

A within-case analysis for each district follows, providing the data from the questionnaires, the discussion at the focus group meetings and the individual interviews. Following a description of each of the five sites, the data are presented in three sections for each case. These include: 1) cluster summary tables developed from the written questionnaires, 2) themes that developed from the focus group discussion, and 3) data collected from individual interviews (three participants in each district) conducted 4-6 weeks following the focus group meeting.

Oakfield School District.

Oakfield School District is the smallest district in this study. The director arranged the focus group meeting, scheduling it during the school day and providing teacher substitutes as necessary. There were two administrators (one special education director, one vice principal), two coordinators (one psychologist and one secondary coordinator), and six high school special education teachers in attendance. The director arrived early, bringing food and beverages. She explained the study to the focus group by stating that she felt that “the data were important to their program evaluation process.” She asked the participants to think about what they would like to do with the information they would receive and said that she would support additional meetings if needed to discuss the use of the follow-up data.

The participants completed the written questionnaire following the slide presentation of Oakfield School District’s 1999 special education graduate post-school

status data. The responses to those questions are sorted by the three levels of participants (administrator, coordinator, teacher) and are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Cluster Summary Table of Questionnaire Focus Group for Oaksfield.

| Level | Administrators (2) | Coordinators (1) | Teachers (6) |
|--|--|--|---|
| Cluster | | | |
| Presentation of data. | Prefer oral presentation and graphs versus data tables in packet. Short report. Summary. | Prefer presentation and graphs versus data tables in packet. Prefer group presentation. | Prefer presentation and graphs versus data tables in packet. Prefer group presentation, discuss with colleagues. |
| Disaggregation of data or other data needed. | Follow along data, (2 to 5 years post graduation). | By age. 1 year later. How graduates got the job, how many they had held. | General ed. data. Age of graduate. Years in programs. Follow along studies. Income. |
| People who need to examine data. | Superintendent. | No comment. | Vocational director-6. Parents. Vocational teachers-3. School counselors-2. |
| Data identified as most important. | Overall, graduates are doing well. IEP goals and the % of goals achieved. Diplomas. | Very comprehensive data. Diploma. 4 areas. | Encouraging. Very positive. Feel validated. Above the state data. Data particular to my students (MR). Employment. 4 areas. |
| Data identified least important. | | | Ethnicity. Gender. |
| Possible program decisions due to data. | Program review. Teacher training. Comparison studies. | Curriculum improvement. | Programs. Curriculum-6. Development of new programs. Scheduling |

Themes Developed from the Discussion

The focus group discussion began with the questions from the written questionnaire primarily concerning the presentation of the data. While Table 4.1 concerned only the data collected from the questionnaire, the discussion moved from those questions to thoughts and concerns regarding what the data meant to the

participants as they discussed their programs. Four themes emerged from the focus group discussion: 1) preference for the presentation of the data, 2) personalizing the data, 3) the low numbers of graduates, and 4) the need to restructure high school programs.

Presentation of the Data. Patterns which emerged from the focus group discussion regarding the participants preference for how the data are presented included: 1) meeting with a group of colleagues and a facilitator to examine the data, 2) graphs rather than tables, and 3) a summary.

1. A group meeting with a facilitator was preferred by the participants to examine the follow-up data. Reasons to do so included the opportunity and time to discuss the data with colleagues. A facilitator was helpful in answering questions, but also assured that time was carved out of the day in order to do this work. Meeting as a group with a facilitator provided value and priority to examining the data that may not have otherwise occurred.

“I need this group. I need to discuss it. I don’t internalize it well. I have added things to my thinking just because of this group,” (teacher).

“There is value in the group. In addition, meeting as a group gave the data priority that, individually, they may not have. I have to schedule it, or I can’t do it (coordinator)”.

“This group meeting is much more meaningful and useful to me than what we have been getting at our in-service meetings” (teacher).

“But, we need somebody like you, that knows the numbers and can lead us through it” (teacher). There was consensus from the group.

“We should use in-service days to review these data and bring in a facilitator”
(teacher).

“An oral presentation, that is valuable. Much more so that a packet of numbers”
(coordinator).

“It is a time value thing. In the interest of time, I would peruse the material to determine value, but not in any depth. This helps, meeting with you (facilitator) and the rest of you (participants)” (teacher).

“Now here’s an idea. Narrate a power-point (presentation) and then send it out on discs. Then we meet as a group, and everybody gets it” (teacher).

2. **Graphs were preferred by the participants to depict the data to data tables.**
Graphs were described as simpler and quicker to inspect and understand than tables.
Participants were provided both data tables and graphs during the focus group meeting.

“Tables are too difficult to interpret” (teacher).

**“I can understand a chart (the graph), I wouldn’t have looked at this (data tables).
It is too much”** (teacher).

“I would have been interested in the findings, but the forms (data tables) appear confusing. I probably wouldn’t have spent the time trying to figure them out, Graphs would have been better” (teacher).

“I wouldn’t have spent the time looking at the tables, it is too much paperwork”
(teacher).

**“I need triggers to understand this, word triggers. I am not a table kind of guy.
The graphs were useful”** (teacher).

“Graphs are much easier to see the relationships than tables” (coordinator).

3. Summaries were suggested as a way to present the data. The administrator was the first to suggest a summary. “A summary, like an executive summary, would help save time reading all of this (data tables).”

“A packet could include a table of contents, graphs for quick comparisons, and a one-page summary” (director).

“Given the volume of paperwork that comes across our desks, this (pointing to the data tables) is pretty threatening. Given the time it would take to interpret, I would prefer a down and dirty one-page synopsis of the whole thing. I look for educational value” (teacher).

“I would like a one-page report, oral presentation, and graphs” (coordinator).

Personalize the Data. The members of the focus group said that they needed to connect the numbers to the students that were represented by these data. They discussed ways that this might occur, suggesting that teachers make the telephone calls to the parents and graduates. This discussion centered around personalizing the data, or assuring that the numbers represented the students that the participants knew.

“Data doesn’t reflect human life” (teacher).

“We need data that reflects the stories of our students’ lives after high school” (teacher).

“We see all 19 of our seniors (graduates) by Halloween. They come in, say hi, tell us what they are doing. Yes, the data needs to reflect these stories” (teacher).

“The data particular to the students I work with (are most important). I want to know which of these (data) are mine to connect the numbers to the kids” (teacher).

Conducting the interviews was suggested as a way to connect to these data. “I found it powerful to talk to the moms’ and dads’ and kids’ themselves. I wouldn’t have missed looking at the results because I collected it” (coordinator).

“Why didn’t we all make the phone calls? I think we should have been asked. I would have done it” (teacher).

“I volunteer to do it (interviews) next year” (teacher).

Numbers of Graduates. The participants expressed concern about what they identified as “low” numbers of special education youth in the graduating class of 1999 compared to the numbers in the lower grades. Although they expressed concern about these numbers, none of the participants knew what the drop-out rate for special education students were in their district. The participants identified drop-out rates as important data for planning programs and curriculum.

“What happens to all the kids? I think we are losing a lot after eighth grade.”
(teacher)

Another teacher added, “What about the drop-outs? The kids that find out they don’t have enough credits to graduate. That last semester as a senior... that is a big drop-out time.”

“We need to look at the number of students (special education). Each year, take a hard look, year by year, and our graduates...or is it drop-outs?” (coordinator).

The director raised the question to the group, “What are our drop-out rates for students in special education?” No one was sure of the rate, but agreed that these particular data were important to them. “We really need to know this” (teacher).

High School Programs. The discussion concerning drop-outs stimulated a discussion about: 1) the lack of options in high school curriculum to meet the needs of non-college bound special education students and 2) the drive to help students attain the necessary credits in order to graduate.

1. **Lack of Options in the High School Curriculum.** Participants expressed their concern regarding the lack of vocational classes, community experiences and work training for their students in special education.

“Students with learning disabilities or behavior issues are not provided the services and programs they need or are interested in. That is why these kids are dropping out.” (teacher).

“We are a blue collar community. These employment outcomes should be considered good. So why are our kids failing high school? We are not preparing them. We don’t have options and classes that fit their needs” (teacher).

“There aren’t the classes they need, for sure. I don’t even know what vocational classes they (the high school) have. I think it is purposely meant to keep us separate” (teacher).

“Our students can’t get into the classes they might have an interest in, or skills in. Either they have to take the credit classes, or the voc class is full. We never have any priority. Seems like especially if the kids have any behavior issues” (teacher).

“Counselors need to be here (at this meeting). If they (special education students) are not going to college, then get them out of here, get them experiences in the community, at work sites. Counselors could do that, if they aren’t finding our kids scholarships” (teacher).

2. Credits for graduation. Participants discussed the pressure they felt to help students meet the requirements of the district for graduation. They expressed a tension between providing students “transition services” and training in order to prepare them for post-school employment and helping them through general education curriculum in order to acquire necessary credits.

“Our biggest struggle is to get them (students in special education) to fit the transition piece, but to - more importantly - fit the diploma” (resource room teacher). When queried, she defined the “diploma” as the Carnegie units required by their district for graduation in specific subject areas.

“The kid and the parent want them to get all the 20-whatever credits to graduate, and yet, you know there is more time needed to prepare them to be in the real world. Get a job, keep a job; get in school (post high school training), stay in school. There is no time to get that part ready. We are too busy getting them credits” (teacher).

“That piece of the puzzle is very difficult because you are constantly just trying to....well, “we need a credit, we need a credit” (teacher).

“A lot of times we know it is a waste of time (credits), too. We know the social time (in general education classes) is good, but the piece of getting them trained for something after high school is difficult when you have to get them the credits” (teacher).

“Community placement for vocational training is limited, both because of staff and because students have to get the credits first and by the time that happens, they are gone” (teacher).

Follow-up Interviews Regarding Data Use

Follow-up interviews were conducted with the administrator, coordinator and a teacher from the focus group. The informants described the use of the post-school status data which included: dissemination of the follow-up study, additional planning meetings, and planning for further data collection.

Dissemination of Follow-up Study. The results of the follow-up study data were disseminated to all school personnel in the district in the Oaksfield Newsletter. The article states, “in general, the special education graduates are doing well, but it is not clear how successful these young people are, as wages, hours and types of work are not known. These data (1998 follow-up data) are being used to evaluate the success of the high school program” (Oaksfield School District Newsletter, 2000).

Additional Meeting to Plan and Review the Follow-up Data. Following the examination of the follow-up data and discussion at the focus group meeting, an additional meeting was scheduled for high school staff to address these data. This meeting occurred during a staff planning in-service day. The teachers and coordinator spent four hours discussing and developing plans based on the follow-up data. The staff discussed 1) transition services, and 2) connections to post-secondary.

1. Transition services. The staff discussed the follow-up data at this meeting and the department head teacher said, “The special education staff realized the need for a sequential process, a continuum for each grade level, a more deliberate process for transition services” (department head teacher). Teachers at this meeting agreed on goals to identify the transition planning that should occur in each grade at the high school, meet with middle school teachers to do the same, and write IEP’s that reflected transition

services with the student outcome in mind, rather than the necessary credits for the diploma (coordinator and teacher reported, notes from meeting).

“We need to evaluate our transition programs, or lack of, and plan for next year’ (coordinator). The discussion included identifying and developing coordinated transition services, connecting to post-secondary training programs, and continuing follow-up data collection.

2. **Increasing Connections to Post-Secondary.** The teachers and the coordinator identified increasing post-secondary outcomes as a target for improvement. The employment rates for the 1999 graduates were viewed as positive. “I feel validated by these (employment rates)” (teacher). “It is encouraging that we are doing so well in this area (employment). I think we could increase the outcomes for post-secondary” (teacher).

“It’s true we don’t stress post-secondary with our kids. There are a number of these guys that could go on, particularly to the community colleges. And we need to let them know about the skills centers” (teacher).

The teachers planned field trips to both community colleges for the special education students in 10th grade, identified field trips and speakers from the community colleges and skills center between grade levels, and discussed how to document these activities for individual students on the IEP (coordinator and teacher report).

Planning for Continued Data Collection. The district plans to collect data on the 2000 special education graduates (consensus of staff at planning meeting). At the focus group meeting the teachers had previously identified the need to personalize the follow-up data, meaning that they wanted to know their own students’ stories behind the

numbers. At the focus group meeting, it was suggested that the teachers should make the telephone calls in order to achieve this. In this subsequent meeting plans were made to collect these data by dividing the telephone calls with each teacher and coordinator conducting the telephone surveys. The teacher said, “We think by doing this, we can personalize the numbers.”

Falcon School District.

The special education director and the secondary special education coordinator arranged the focus group meeting. This meeting was scheduled on a half-day release school day designated for training purposes. There were two administrators (one special education director, one school-to-career director), three coordinators (three secondary special education coordinators), and 10 high school special education teachers in attendance. A state vocational counselor was present. The director introduced the meeting by expressing her “keen interest in the findings and belief in the importance of using data for program evaluations and decision-making”.

The responses to the questionnaire, sorted by the three levels of participants, are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Cluster Summary Table of Questionnaire Focus Group for Falcon.

| | Administrators (2) | Coordinators (3) | Teachers (10) |
|--|---|---|---|
| Presentation of data. | Executive summary. | Oral presentation and slides. | Graphs, oral presentation and group discussion 9. "Just like we are doing it". |
| Disaggregation of data or other data needed. | Intervals, 6 months, 3, 5, 7 & 10 years. | Wages and hours. SES. Years in district. | Regular education follow-up data. Individual high schools. |
| People who need to examine data. | Vocational teachers. | Counselors. Vice principals. Administrators. | Assessment coordinator General education teachers-4. Vocational staff-5 All high school special education teachers-3. Counselors-3. |
| Data identified as most important. | What was not there: drop outs, no interviews. Numbers of special education students in 9 th , 10 th , 11 th , and 12 th grade. | Improvement from last year. Engagement rate improved. Reduction in agency linkages. | Improvement overall. Difference from the district and the state data, positive. More graduates than last year. Gender. |
| Data identified as least important. | | | Gender. |
| Possible program decisions due to data. | Use to evaluate and question program effectiveness. What about the students that did not graduate, can we find them? | Curricular changes. | Focus curriculum toward life skills-7 Curricular changes-8 Developing the IEP. Update the IEP. |

Themes Developed From the Discussion

The following themes emerged from the focus group discussion: 1) preference for data presentation; 2) personalize the data; 3) low numbers of graduates; 4) lack of high school programs for special education students.

Presentation of the Data. Participants identified the following as the preferred method examining the follow-up data for optimal use: 1) group meeting with colleagues and a facilitator, 2) graphs rather than tables, and 3) a summary.

1. The participants preferred meeting with colleagues and a facilitator to examine these data. Meeting as a group provided the opportunity and time to analyze and reflect on the data.

“We need an oral presentation to clear up all the questions” (teacher).

“The packet alone would have been pretty meaningless without this meeting” (teacher).

“To me, it is a self-reflective thing. We are doing all right, or, this is where I need to improve. And as a group, together, as a school, you know you are in the mix. Maybe I need to improve my communication with the parent and student about the agency connection. That information (the data) discussed with this group helps the self-reflection” (teacher).

2. Graphs were preferred for data presentation because they were perceived by the participants as easier to read and understand, therefore taking less time.

“I would like graphs, not tables, with numbers” (teacher).

“I would have looked at this (data tables), and, well, thought, too many! Too thick. Too much. I wouldn’t have understood it. Something simple, graphs that I can easily compare. And it doesn’t need to be broken down so much” (teacher).

“Absolutely liked all these data tables, but I enjoy data. I don’t think the average joe on the street, or teacher would take the time to look at all this. Something quick and sweet” (coordinator).

1. Summaries were suggested as a way to present the data. “I would like an executive summary’ (director).

“If the packet is to stand on it’s own, then it needs a summary of some type” (school-to-work director).

“I would prefer a summary that is user-friendly. This (packet) is a bit cumbersome. I could use a synopsis” (coordinator).

“This is way too cumbersome. If a quick summary and easily read graphs came to me, then, yeah, I might look at it” (teacher).

Personalize the Data. The participants expressed the need for the numbers to be personalized for them and suggested teachers collecting the data as a way to do this. For the participants in this focus group, personalizing the data meant finding a way to connect the numbers to the students that they knew, perhaps hearing the “stories” themselves.

“We need the stories in order for the data to be useful” (teacher).

“We need to personify the data” (teacher).

“The data were personalized for me as I listened to the parents and the graduates’ (coordinator).

“It is valid and rewarding for the teacher to talk to the parents. We get feed-back we don’t typically hear. We connect to these numbers because we talked to the families” (teacher).

“We need the anecdotal stories, we need to somehow connect to those kids” (coordinator).

“There are too many tables. We know them as people, not numbers. That’s how we need to know them” (teacher).

“Anecdotal data...we need the heart part” (teacher).

“If you collected the data, or got the protocols, then you could hear the stories. Teachers didn’t collect these data this year, maybe we need to look carefully at that” (director).

Numbers of Graduates. After viewing the slides and discussing methods to present and collect the data, the discussion centered on the participants concern regarding the low number of special education graduates. The participants expected higher numbers of graduates, although they did not know how many they expected.

“What really bothers me is who wasn’t there” (director).

“We need to understand these missing data, perhaps developing alternative settings” (coordinator).

“What could have been different, to have kept kids in programs? What could we have done not to have this low number of graduates?” (teacher).

“What is the number of students (special education) in each year of high school? Where do we lose them?” (teacher).

“I was struck by what wasn’t there. I was struck by...how many drop-outs do we have? Who might have been in the pool if everyone had stayed? What about those 27 people that couldn’t be found? Who are they? What are their demographics? What happened to them? I was intrigued by what wasn’t there. As well as the successes that were there, those missing data might inform our programs and curriculum” (director).

“We can’t assume we are successful when we don’t know what happened to all the missing kids. We need to assure that we have working telephone numbers in the spring (for the year 2000 graduates)” (coordinator).

High School Programs. Following the discussion around drop-outs, the participants discussed: 1) the lack of high school programs and curricula to meet the needs of students with mild disabilities, and 2) attaining credits for the diploma.

1. Lack of high school programs. The participant expressed their concern that students in special education were not provided the programs they needed.

“We need programs to match the needs of students outside of the typical credit to diploma program” (coordinator).

“We know less students will get diplomas. We know they aren’t going to be able to pass the WASL, or any competency test. They won’t get their diploma. So what are we going to do? Without the programs to keep these kids in school, why should they stay? We don’t have much to offer them” (teacher).

“What will happen to those who can’t get a diploma? Surely this will change the data. Or maybe it will change the way we do business, the courses and programs and services that we should offer in lieu of typical high school programs” (coordinator).

2. Credits for graduation. “Only getting kids credits does not prepare them for an occupation. We need more life skills type courses for students with milder disabilities. Those are the students we keep pushing into classes for credits, where they aren’t successful” (teacher).

“General ed. teachers need to see the worth of special education, as do principals. There are other outcomes than passing classes for credits for graduation” (teacher).

“I am amazed at the high rate of engagement, the high rate of employment (as depicted in the follow-up data). We need to concentrate on something besides getting them through the right classes and the right credits just so they can graduate, and think

about increasing their training and chances for high wages in more vocational classes.

Yet, we don't do that. I don't think we can say we are successful quite yet. The kids that aren't here are the ones that couldn't hack the high school programs" (teacher).

"We are unable to do true transition planning, which would cause these particular data (post-school outcomes). We are too busy trying to get them through English 101" (teacher).

Follow-up Interviews Regarding Data Use

Follow up interviews were conducted with the special education director, secondary special education coordinator and two teachers. The following activities were reported.

Dissemination of Follow-up Study. A packet of information was sent to all special education high school staff from the special education director including the 1999 post-school follow-up data, the scores on the WASL tests and a survey. The survey asked, "If you could redesign your high school curriculum for your students, what would you do differently?" These surveys were not returned to the administration office at the time of the individual interview, but the administrator said, "After the focus group meeting and the interest in the WASL scores, I believe our return rate will be high."

The follow-up data were presented to superintendents, principals, and vice-principals at an administrator meeting. Grading policy and procedures, credit management, and diploma policy were discussed at this meeting (director reported).

"The discussion (at the meeting) included the discrepancy between a college-prep, credit-driven model of high school and transition plans and services that meet the needs of students in special education. The administrators mostly recognized the need for

flexible and varied programs and services for students outside of the drive for credit, passing the WASL, and graduation. We will continue to discuss this, and hopefully, develop guidelines” (special education director).

Additional Meeting to Review and Plan Regarding Follow-up Data. A meeting was held with secondary staff to plan for program and policy changes. Prior to this meeting, information was distributed to all secondary special education staff that included the follow-up data tables, hand-outs from the focus group meeting, and the percentage of special education students that had passed the WASL. “The purpose of providing the WASL scores and the follow-up data are to encourage the group to identify programs and services that were needed for special education students at the secondary level. The notion of a conversation regarding secondary curriculum is essential to their use of these data” (director).

Planning Curricular Changes. Participants reported that after examining the follow-up data they were modifying current classes and developing additional classes for students in special education at the high school.

“Curriculum changes are planned for next year for secondary special education students. These include adding vocational components to resource room classes already in existence, and additional classes that can meet the needs of these students” (coordinator).

Specific targets for curricular changes included modifying a 9th grade Vocational-English class for special education students that would provide assistance to students for transition planning.

“We also want to add social skills that are related to life after high school, and survival skills, the skills to get and keep jobs” (teacher).

“As part of a more functional academic program, we need to find additional funding for students that need anger control and emotional management therapy as part of a functional academic program” (teacher).

Creekview School District.

Creekview School District is the largest of the five districts in this study. The special education director instructed the secondary special education director to organize the follow-up study and the focus group meeting. The focus group meeting was scheduled on a release school day designated for training purposes. The focus group meeting was one of the sessions offered during the training day. Notices were sent to secondary special education teachers in addition to the general flyer. There were a total of five administrators (one secondary special education director, four vice-principals), two coordinators, and 17 high school special education teachers in attendance. The secondary director briefly introduced the meeting. Table 4.3 presents the findings from the questionnaires.

Table 4.3. Cluster Summary Table of Questionnaire Focus Group for Creekview.

| | Administrators (5) | Coordinators (2) | Teachers (17) |
|--|--|---|---|
| Presentation of data. | Nothing too lengthy, written summary. Protocol of interview questions. Slide presentation. | Oral presentation and slides. Student stories. Presentation, "clear, quick and painless". | Graphs, oral presentation and group discussion-15 Discussion-14 "Just like this." Slides, graphs-15 |
| Disaggregation of data or other data needed. | Social Economic Status-2 Comparison with similar sized school. Nation-wide data. | Hours and wages. Drop out rates. | Regular education follow-up data. Individual high schools. By curriculum, functional versus academic. |
| People who need to examine data. | All special education teachers. | All administrators. Parents. Students. Resource room teachers. Counselors. | Special education director-13 All principals-4 Teacher from each department of general education-3 Parents-5 Students-4 |
| Data identified as most important. | Diploma versus employment rates, asking the question, "What does a diploma mean?" | Engagement rate looks good. Lack of agency connection, "this is a shame." Number of students that achieve their identified goals. | Post-secondary connection was low. No students went on to post-secondary even though some could. Agency connection and goals. |
| Data identified as least important. | | "It's all important." | Satisfied with life. |
| Possible program decisions due to data. | Share with general education teachers to not forget special ed. students and their post-school goals. Special education classes should not focus on college prep. | Curriculum changes. | Change high school curriculum-15 Motivate students. More access to adult agencies-7 |

Themes Developed from Discussion

The following themes emerged in the focus group discussion: 1) how best to present the data, 2) the concept of personalizing the data, 3) the low number of special education graduates, and, 4) the need for restructuring high school programs.

Presentation of the Data. The consensus from the participants was a preference for a group presentation of the data, providing the participants with the opportunity to discuss and analyze these data as well as structuring a time to do so. Graphs were preferred over data tables but in conjunction with a group meeting with a presentation. The director wanted an executive summary in addition to the meeting.

“I like a presentation. Clear, quick and painless” (teacher).

“It looks too thick, too overwhelming. I wouldn’t have known how to interpret it without this meeting” (teacher).

“An oral presentation with slides is the way to go. Fits my learning style” (teacher).

“It is important to hear the thoughts the teachers have regarding their students” (coordinator).

“Increased communication about our students after they leave us, we need to talk together. Communication will enhance the goals of our students and their outcomes” (teacher).

“This is so very helpful, hearing what you all (teachers and coordinators) have to say about these numbers” (director).

“I would not have even glanced at this (data packet). I would rather have a presentation” (teacher).

“Tables, written reports, graphs, whatever, but supported by an oral presentation to answer the questions’ (teacher).

“I would read a written report, a short one, but I want the slide show and presentation, or chance are, I wouldn’t get it” (teacher).

“In addition to a meeting, I would like an executive summary that I could use to share with administrators and possibly board members” (director).

Personalize the Data. The participants wanted to personalize the data by connecting the numbers to the students and their “stories”. A way to increase opportunities for this connection was by teachers collecting the data through telephone interviews.

“If I knew which name went with which number, then this would be more powerful. I would feel more affected by the kids’ lives” (teacher).

“It would be neat to have some students (graduates) here (at the focus group meeting) that utilized the agencies, or got jobs, and could tell us the stories’ (vice principal).

“When you are the one making the phone call, you hear those stories. It does affect you” (coordinator).

The value of conducting the interviews was described as “powerful” by one of the teachers who had collected the data. “I feel sort of connected to these numbers since I made the phone calls. I would definitely read all of this (data tables), it means something to me” (teacher).

“I would examine the numbers carefully because I did several of the interviews and feel that it is my data, too” (coordinator).

Numbers of Graduates. The low number of graduates in the follow-up study concerned the members of the focus group. They expected more special education graduates based on their perception of numbers of special education students overall. “I am still astounded by the 91 kids that graduated! (He had expected a higher number.) It is unnerving to me that these kids are our future...and that they’re lost. We are NOT doing the job we should be doing.”

“We only contacted 51 of 91 students? Is this good? I don’t think so. We are losing too many kids, and, of the ones that are staying, we are only seeing a picture of our successful students, think about the rest” (teacher).

“The most important number to me is the drop-out rate” (teacher).

“Is this (the low number of graduates) because kids exit out of special education when they are seniors?” There was general surprise from the participants that a senior would exit from special education. “I don’t think we fix many kids in high school, and therefore they exit special ed.!” (teacher).

“What is the ratios of students in 9th grade to 12th grade, in regular ed. and special ed.? We need to know this” (teacher).

“Your thoughts about our drop-outs, the students we can’t reach, are important, very important thoughts” (director).

High School Programs. The discussion of high school programs centered on 1) credits for graduation, 2) lack of options in the high school programs and curricula, and 3) high-stakes state and district tests.

1. Credits for graduation. Credits seemed to be driving the high school program according to the participants.

“ Students are taking courses for credits only, not for what they need” (teacher).

“We are still trying to put our students into a traditional 21 credit system and whether that is the best thing, well, I think that is the real question” (coordinator).

“The conflict is credits versus time to teach transition” (teacher).

“Why are these kids (special education) in a 21 credit track? Very unrealistic for the majority of students” (teacher).

2. Lack of programs and curricula for special education students. The participants expressed their concern about the limited classes and programs for students in special education, particularly those with mild disabilities. High school, as described by these educators, seemed to be primarily offering a college-prep program with few options for vocationally oriented students.

“We need to share these (follow-up) data with high school teachers and with staff. A lot of the L.D. (learning disabled) students in regular ed. (education) programs...not a single one of those kids went to a 4-year college program. They are not getting the courses that they really need. It’s right there in front of us. What direction do you think we are going?” (teacher).

“We have to help change the high school curriculum” (teacher).

“I think we do an excellent job with those few kids that are heading for college and good with the kids that are really low, but those in the middle, well, there isn’t much to offer” (teacher).

“These data tell us that none of our students with learning disabilities are going to college, yet they are in all college-prep classes, which are the classes available. That’s what we need to use these data for, give kids classes and experiences that will benefit

them after school. They are going to be employed, so let's prepare them for that" (teacher).

"High school is preparing kids to go to college, so that's what they say (as a transition goal)" (teacher).

"We need to change our curriculum. We will have five college-prep English classes and one lower level class. Where do these kids fit in? The lack of real vocational training is the issue. The kids in between, they don't have a high enough reading level to get in the skills center, they are too high for the D.D. program. We are really doing our kids a disservice in that we don't have enough vocational offerings and we keep trying to put them in this college prep program that doesn't fit" (teacher).

"Seventy percent of students are headed for the workforce, not college. Seventy percent of our kids are not headed for four-year college, they are in the wrong program" (teacher).

"If kids knew what was out there, they could make better choices, get training...we don't have the opportunities for them to do that" (teacher).

"There is no place currently in what we offer to take quality time and teach those skills. Looking at changing the curriculum, real strong vocational training is needed. Moving those kids along through four years of coordinated efforts to post school outcomes, that's what we should be doing" (teacher).

"We need to use these data to develop programs at our schools. We need this kind of data for our administration (at the building level) to force changes" (teacher).

“The district was doing a disservice to our students by not having a range of options (outside of a college preparatory program) for students with mild disabilities” (coordinator).

3. High-stakes state and district tests. Participants expressed their thoughts regarding the pressure on both themselves and their students regarding the WASL.

“The WASL’s are so far removed from the world they (special education students) live in. It is not relevant to them” (teacher).

“I don’t see any relevancy for our special education kids to take it (the WASL), except to say, “Hey, guess what” Your scores are low.” Surprise. Maybe if they got feedback, except your scores are low” (teacher).

“I hope it never gets there, that parents fear that employers will start looking at the WASL scores. And that would be terrible for our kids. Right now it is just sitting there for review and to look at the scores. But there is such a huge gap between special education and general education students that it looks really bad at this point” (teacher).

“Even though they fail in this area (WASL), if they are successful in this area, (outcomes, particularly employment) that should be pointed out, especially to students” (vice-principal).

Follow-up Interviews Regarding Data Use

Follow-up interviews were conducted with the director, coordinator, and one teacher. The following activities were discussed.

Dissemination of Follow-up Study. The follow-up data were disseminated to the district in a newsletter. The handouts from the focus group presentation were distributed to the administrators.

Planning Transition Services and Curricular Changes. Meetings were held with secondary special education staff at each of the five high schools to plan for program and policy changes based on the follow-up data. Teachers, a mental health provider and the secondary coordinator met in one of the district high schools to discuss the data and develop plans for the 2000-2001 school year. "We will begin in 9th grade to deliberately and carefully begin transition planning for post high school outcomes" (coordinator).

"We need to do some things differently for these students. It is cruel and unusual punishment to put these students through the (general education) high school program" (teacher).

Plans were made to infuse vocational and career planning curricula into resource room English classes, work towards better coordination with the Skills Center, and develop community based learning sites. These activities are in the initial planning stages.

Curricular Change in the Classroom. A high school resource room teacher implemented curriculum changes in his classroom following his participation in the focus group meeting. He created a slide presentation using the follow-up data and presented this to senior students in a special education resource room. Following the presentation and discussion with his class, the teacher gave each student a copy of his or her IEP. The teacher asked each student to review the IEP goals and identify the anticipated outcome. The students were then asked to complete a form indicating the anticipated outcome and providing a telephone number for someone who would know how to reach them the following November.

In the presentation to the class, this teacher discussed post-secondary training including on-the-job training, apprenticeships and two- year vocational colleges, rather than emphasizing four-year colleges.

“Collecting the follow-up data for my seniors has become an intentional focus of my curriculum. I want these data for my own use, but also to use to motivate students to plan for their future. These numbers represent boys and girls that they know. They will be those numbers in a year. I want them to know I am following them, so don’t let me down” (teacher).

Crest School District

The special education director arranged the focus group meeting. The director attended the meeting with four teachers (identified as vocational specialists), one para-professional teacher and the secondary special education coordinator. Table 4.4 presents the findings from the questionnaire.

Table 4.4. Cluster Summary Table of Questionnaire Focus Group for Crest.

| | Administrators (1) | Coordinators (1) | Teachers (5) |
|--|---|--|--|
| Presentation of data. | Tables, written report and graphs. | Oral presentation and slides. | Graphs, oral presentation and group discussion-5 |
| Disaggregation of data or other data needed. | Individual students. | By high school. | Individual high schools. |
| People who need to examine data. | Post-secondary contacts (college coordinators, adult agency staff). | “Monitoring teachers” (special education teachers that write the IEP’s). | Administrators. Agency representation. |
| Data identified as most important. | Some of the IEP’s were not complete. “We stress the importance of completing this, I don’t know why they aren’t.” | Engagement rate. | Poor numbers in post-secondary training. Engagement rate, “positive”. Comparison of 1998 and 199 data. |
| Data identified as least important. | “The numbers are really too small to make any judgment.” | | Gender and ethnicity. |
| Possible program decisions due to data. | Completing the IEP’s regarding agency connection. | | Use to get administrators to see the importance of vocational programs. |

Themes Developed from Discussion

The following themes emerged in the focus group discussion: 1) presentation of the data, 2) personalizing the data, and, 3) restructuring high school programs.

Presentation of the Data. The participants preferred a meeting with colleagues and a facilitator to discuss the data and preferred the data presented in graphs. A group presentation provided a time to examine the data that may not have occurred without the meeting. Graphs were identified as easier and quicker to examine. The director preferred a summary.

“As a classroom teacher, no (wouldn’t have looked at data tables). Give me something that I can understand. Give me bar graphs. These (data tables) are too much. This (packet) is too much. Wouldn’t look at it” (vocational specialist).

“What level of responsibility that you have dictates the amount of information that you need. The level of detail and information that administration needs is different from what I need. I would go to an oral presentation, but likely not spend much time looking at the charts (data tables)” (vocational specialist).

“I have too much paper already. Give me someone to present it to me” (vocational specialist).

“Being able to talk as a group is important. We are doing better each year. This leads to more discussion” (vocational specialist).

“My preference is for bar graphs and in the four main areas (employment, post-secondary training, engagement, and agency connection), but with a presentation” (vocational specialist).

“I’m risking here. I’m sorry, but I would probably file all of this in my round file cabinet, that is unless you assigned me this to read. I would much rather have simple bar graphs and a presentation” (coordinator).

“I would have looked at the data tables closely, but I would also have liked an executive summary” (director).

Personalize the Data. The participants wanted the data personalized for them so that they would know what the outcomes were for their own students. Teachers collecting the data was suggested as a way to accomplish this.

“If this (follow-up data) were broken down by high school, then I would know how my kids did. That would be way more meaningful” (vocational specialist).

“What would hit home the most is if the teachers got their student’s interview forms. Then they could relate to it” (director).

“I would love to know how my kids did’ (vocational specialist).

“If you made the phone calls for your own kids then you could relate to the numbers with the names. If you did the interview, you would know what programs they went through” (vocational specialist).

“Additional money was offered to anyone that wanted to do the telephone interviews, but no one wanted to” (director).

“Well, I still think it is a good idea, and would be important to do, but, yeah, you’re right, I don’t have the time” (vocational specialist).

High School Programs. The themes centered on the topics of 1) lack of high school programs and curricula, 3) agency connections, and 4) school reform and the WASL.

1. Lack of high school programs. This district has a “transition program” for students with mild disabilities, which typically occurs after the student has taken the required high school classes. These services are not provided to every high school student in special education. Resource room teachers were described as providing support to special education students for general education classes. Vocational specialist are the teachers in the transition program.

“We are doing a good enough job with the kids we get, but the resource room teacher should also be responsible for transition planning. The kids need services and classes they aren’t getting.” (vocational specialist).

“The resource room teachers provide academic support to get them credits, and but those teachers should be aware of the student’s (post-school) plans, too. They need other classes, which they don’t have and can’t get” (vocational specialist).

“We do transition after students finish all the required classes, if they can get through the academics. Too few kids get into the transition program, so most kids don’t get what they really need” (vocational specialist).

“The transition plan is the integral part of all this. We need to look at these data for transition planning. It causes us to think about the philosophical piece of why we do what we do. We need to provide more options for these kids” (vocational specialist).

“As this data continues to be compiled and I start taking a look historically at where we’re going and if the numbers don’t keep going up, then I need to hit things better. I try to be realistic with my kids. Unfortunately, I only get the ones that can make it through the high school curriculum. Most of my kids knew they were going to go off and get a job. That’s realistic. Too bad we aren’t training more students for this outcome” (vocational specialist).

“I push real hard for skills center training while they are in high school. We can get them training before they graduate or get them to stay longer. They are disenfranchised with the high school anyway, so they don’t care about graduating with their class. But these are so few of the kids that need it” (vocational specialist).

2. Agency Connections. The follow-up data provided information about the

number of students with connections to adult service agencies after graduation as well as the linkages identified on the IEP. The participants in the focus group identified this as an area of concern, although one teacher disagreed. The director was concerned about compliancy issues regarding the IEP.

“What caught my eye is that some of the IEP’s were not complete in the agency connection” (director).

“I would like to know why they (teachers) aren’t doing it (completing agency connection). We stress the importance of doing this” (director).

“Looking at the data, we need to look at the IEP. The IEP should stress agency linkage” (coordinator).

“Look, the agency piece should go down and the others (employment, post-secondary and engagement) should go up. That tells me we’re doing okay” (vocational specialist).

3. School reform and the WASL. The majority of the focus group discussion concerned high stakes testing and school reform.

“I think there is a conflict here, and it is rearing its’ ugly head in high school. The higher the standards get, the more stringent the standards become, the fewer the options we have for kids. It’s becoming very elitist. Pardon me, but that’s what it’s becoming. But it’s true, we’re really facing a dilemma in trying to create programs for kids and yet helping them get to the standards. And our options aren’t many out there” (coordinator).

“One of our mom’s called OSPI because she was (angry) about the senior project. Well, I’m sorry that the state says we have to meet these standards now, and we’re making modifications but until the state, the royal “we”, actually recognizes and says out

loud, in public, “We’ve got 12 to 15% of our student population we know can’t make this (standards)”, and comes up with some alternative measure, we, as special educators, are forced to keep telling our kids, “You’ve got to try harder than you’ve ever tried before, and I know you’re not going to be able to do this, but you’ve still have to try” (vocational specialist).

“I’ve got parents (saying), “But we know she can’t do it.” And it puts us in a really hard spot because they have to do the WASL’s and we know they aren’t going to pass it and we know they aren’t going to meet standards” (vocational specialist).

Follow-up Interviews Regarding Data Use

Individual interviews were conducted with the director, the secondary coordinator, and one teacher. The only reported use of the follow-up data was addressing the adult agency connections.

Monitoring IEP’s for Agency Connections. The director said that examining the follow-up data had caused her to ask the secondary coordinator to more closely monitor the IEP’s for compliance in the area of adult agency linkages.

“I have no concerns about the outcomes, the “n” is really too small to make any conclusions. My only concern was about the missing data on the IEP forms concerning agency linkages. We need to look into that and find out why it isn’t happening. They (teachers) know they must fill it out. We will be looking at the IEPs closely” (special education director).

The coordinator said, “My only plans for using the follow-up data were to assure that the IEP was completed properly.”

“If the agency connection is low, then kids are doing what they’re supposed to be doing. They don’t need the help” (vocational specialist).

Cherry School District.

The special education director arranged the focus group meeting four months in advance. Due to a new assignment, she turned the coordination of this project over to the secondary special education director, who was new to the district, but familiar with the statewide follow-up data study. The meeting was scheduled for after school. Staff that attended received additional money for their time. Attending the meeting were one director, (secondary special education director), two coordinators (two secondary coordinators), and three high school special education teachers in attendance. Table 4.5 presents the findings from the focus group questionnaire.

Table 4.5. Cluster Summary Table of Questionnaire Focus Group for Cherry.

| | Administrators (1) | Coordinators (2) | Teachers (3) |
|--|--|--|--|
| Presentation of data. | Tables, oral presentation and graphs. | Oral presentation and slides. | Graphs, oral presentation and group discussion. "just like this"-3 |
| Disaggregation of data or other data needed. | Employment, hours and wages. | Hours and wages. | Hours and wages. |
| People who need to examine data. | All secondary teachers. Counselors. | Counselors. Administrators. Junior high special education staff and parents. | Teachers. Administrators. Counselors. Parents. |
| Data identified as most important. | These are likely the most stable cases, what about the others? | Lack of agency connection-2 | Lack of agency connection-3 Outcomes for students of color-2 |
| Data identified as least important. | None. | None. | None. |
| Possible program decisions due to data. | Training for teachers. Focus on transition rather than diploma. | Curriculum changes-2 Train teachers. Develop IEP goals. | Curriculum changes-3 |

Themes Developed from Discussion

The following themes emerged from the focus group discussion: 1) preference for presentation of the data, 2) personalizing the data, 3) drop-outs, 4) adult agency connections, and, 5) restructuring high school programs.

Presentation of the Data. There was group consensus regarding a preference for a group meeting with a facilitator to examine the follow-up data.

"I think I speak for many. If I would have received this (data tables) from courier mail, and they said take a look at this and see what you think, and there was not a

meeting or anything, well, I would have dropped it into a file folder and it would have gone into my file cabinet never to be seen again. That's what I would have done with it. Look, if I wouldn't have had to take an action on it, I wouldn't have done anymore with it. I mean that" (teacher).

"I hate to say it, but I wouldn't have tried without this meeting" (teacher).

"I would have looked at it and said what's this? That's as far as I would have gone without this group," (teacher).

"I would have not done a thing with it, to be totally honest. But with a presentation and a person, I mean this, I can connect with this information now, but without this, I would not have made a connection. Not at all" (teacher).

"Meeting as a group is beneficial to all of us and carves out the time to take a close look at this (follow-up data)" (coordinator).

Personalize the Data.

Personalizing the data for these participants included hearing the stories. "The numbers are strong, but we need the stories" (teacher).

Teachers conducting the interviews provided a way to do this. The teacher and coordinator who had conducted part of the telephone interviews said that the process of interviewing parents "provided me with the stories" (coordinator).

"Conducting the interviews made the data more personal. It had a positive effect on me, answering questions about why this is low, or this is good. We know from talking to the parents" (teacher).

“The *why*'s (stories), not the *what*'s (numbers) are the integral part. We have to know the students and their stories to tie it to programs, or lack of programs. That will tell us what to do” (coordinator).

“Somehow, we need to know who these numbers belong to. If we had the names, or the interview forms, maybe that would help us understand more than just the numbers” (teacher).

Numbers of Graduates and Drop-outs.

Participants in the focus group meeting were concerned about the number of graduates in the study. They expected more special education graduates.

“What was going through my mind was what happened to all the kids?” (teacher).

“These numbers represent the stable population. Those students who dropped out as well as the ones we couldn't reach, that is too many students” (teacher).

“What about the others? The drop-outs?”

“So, basically, we reached the stable kids. The stable kids we kept until they graduated. We know the rest left awhile ago” (coordinator).

Adult Agency Connections.

The coordinator that had conducted some of the interviews was initially the person most concerned about the low number of adult agency connections. Others agreed with her as the discussion continued.

“It bothers me the most that there were no linkages on the IEP (to adult agencies). When I would make the call, the parent would say, “What is DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation)?” That really bothered me” (coordinator).

“Some of the kids and parents said they didn’t have a life. They didn’t know where to go. They didn’t know they could go back to DVR” (teacher).

“We don’t know enough about the agencies out there to help the kids and their families” (teacher).

“This data strikes me the most. I wonder how many of the students who are doing nothing, no work, no school, have an agency connection. I would say, not many” (teacher).

High School Programs. The discussion of high school programs centered on 1) credits for graduation, 2) lack of high school programs and curricula, and 3) high-stakes state and district test

1. Credits for graduation. Teachers were concerned that their efforts were put toward helping students attain credits over transition services.

“We spend most of our time focusing on diplomas rather than the student outcome and build our programs around graduation requirements rather than student outcomes” (teacher).

“Teachers concentrate on curriculum that the students need for high school completion, the most important credit. They are English teachers, history teachers, health teachers, but not necessarily special education teachers. That’s how they think of themselves” (coordinator).

2. Lack of High School Programs. The participants were concerned about the lack of programs and services for students to prepare them for post-school life.

“If we had programs for them, maybe they wouldn’t drop out” (teacher).

“These data refocus our attention to something that is real to students whose skills aren’t academics...life after high school. We should be doing more. We don’t have the options they need” (coordinator).

“We should be providing these students something useful for their lives. Knowing that they can’t get the English credits is not helping them, but we don’t have much to offer” (teacher).

“A serious and thoughtful look at the services we provide high school special ed. students, that is what we need to do. What is there, what isn’t, how to provide what is needed’ (teacher).

3. School Reform and WASL. Higher academic standards and passing high stakes tests seemed to add additional pressure on teachers, making it more difficult to provide transition services.

“High schools are interested in measurable goals. Special education is not part of that. This is the 4th goal, it should have as much emphasis as the others” (teacher).

“It is the competency test (district level test mandatory for graduation) and the WASL, and helping students to pass that is the primary reason why special education teachers don’t think about providing transition services, specially designed programs and instruction. Standards get higher and higher, academically, our kids can’t make it” (teacher).

“You don’t think when the bar is raised, that our kids will either leave or cause big problems? Of course. We are not providing equal opportunities, only equal demands through these tests” (teacher).

Follow-up Interviews Regarding Data Use.

Individual interviews were conducted with the secondary special education coordinator, the high school coordinator and one teacher. The following activities were reported.

Transition Planning. Meetings were held with secondary special education staff to plan for 1) curricular and program changes, and 2) agency connections.

1. Curricular and program changes.

“I am working with a committee specifically to look at developing new forms that would help teachers identify the transition needs for students and do the work before writing the IEP. We pulled 45 files to review the courses of study and the transition goals for the students, and we found little, and mostly no correlation. Nowhere are we addressing the student’s transition goals in high school!” (coordinator).

“Graduation and course of study is the goal we want to work on this year. Shouldn’t these be coordinated somehow? We need to address this in areas of information to teachers, students and parents. Ultimately, we need to develop policy and procedures regarding transition planning in our district” (director). “One way we need to do this is discuss early on with parents the great American dream of college. If this isn’t possible, we need to adjust the curriculum appropriately for that student” (director).

2. Agency connections. The coordinator reported change in program and policy in adult agency linkages. “I was outraged by the lack of adult agency connections on the IEP’s. First of all, many of them (IEP’s) didn’t even have a recommendation for a linkage, and secondly, if they did, it was not followed through. Outrageous!”

Coordinators at each high school were meeting with every teacher who wrote IEP’s from 9th grade through 12th grade. These teachers were given specific telephone numbers for adult agencies and instructed to indicate those numbers on the IEP’s. From 8th grade forward, every parent was to be given information at the IEP meeting about adult agencies and this was to be noted on the IEP, including telephone numbers of the agency. If the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation was the agency identified as a possible linkage in 8th grade, it was to be noted on the IEP the date that this contact was to occur, typically in the 11th or 12th grade. The IEP included an addition field in which to note that the contact with the adult agency had been completed (coordinator).

Additional training was conducted with all teachers providing information about adult service agencies. Teachers were encouraged to think of a variety of agencies that could benefit their students, and to always complete the linkage portion of the IEP in conjunction with the parent (coordinator reported).

“We want this activity of developing linkages with adult agencies to become systematized and teachers will automatically work with students and families to develop this coordination” (coordinator).

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Multiple case study research strengthens the precision and the stability of the findings (Mile & Huberman, 1994). Each setting has a few properties it shares with many others, some properties it shares with some others, and some properties it shares with no others. Research questions are necessary to multiple case studies, with a continuous refocusing of parameters around the study. Analyzing the data across cases assists in interpretation of the data to test the soundness of the conclusions (Stake, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Cross-case analysis provided the means to identify themes that emerged across the five cases. These data provided information to formulate the conclusions of this study and suggestions on how best to support local districts in using follow-up data for evaluating their secondary programs.

Discussion of Cross-Case Analysis

Six themes emerged from the focus group questionnaire and discussions. These were: 1) participants prefer examining follow-up data with colleagues and with a facilitator presenting these data; 2) participants prefer follow-up data presented in graphs rather than tables; 3) the data needs to be personalized for the participants by hearing the stories; 4) the low number of special education graduates are disturbing and those numbers are important for program decisions; 5) traditional high school programs conflict with providing transition services for students in special education; and 6) connections to adult agencies should be addressed earlier and more systematically. Table 4.6 describes these themes by district.

Table 5.1 Themes Emerging From Cross Case Analysis.

| Theme | Oakfield | Falcon | Creekviw | Crest | Cherry |
|---|----------|--------|----------|-------|--------|
| Theme 1: The majority of school district participants prefer examining follow-up data with colleagues and a knowledgeable facilitator. | X | X | X | X | X |
| Theme 2: The majority of the participants prefer the data presented in graphs rather than data tables. | X | X | X | | |
| Theme 3. Personalizing the follow-up data was important to the participants, particularly the teachers. "Personalizing" means hearing the student stories and connecting the data to individual students. | X | X | X | X | X |
| Theme 4. The low number of special education graduates and the perceived drop-out rate were disturbing to the participants. | X | X | X | | X |
| Theme 5. Traditional high school programs are perceived as conflicting with providing transition services, and provide few options to special education students. Factors identified by participants include: | | | | | |
| 1) the importance of credits and graduation requirements in the selection of classes having priority over individual transition services; | X | X | X | | X |
| 2) the lack of vocational and functional classes for these students; and, | X | X | X | X | X |
| 3) the additional pressure of high stakes tests (including the WASL and district level tests), increased academic standards and school reform. | | | X | X | X |
| Theme 6. Connections to adult agencies need to be addressed earlier and more vigorously. | | | | X | X |

Discussion of Themes Developed from Cross-Case Analysis

Six themes emerged from this study. The first three concern the methods of data presentation and collection, while the last three concern transition services and high schools in general.

Presenting the Data to a Group. Examining the follow-up data with a group of colleagues and with a knowledgeable facilitator was preferred across all sites and levels of participants. Examining the data with colleagues provided the participants the opportunity and the time to reflect on these data. Participants said that without a scheduled time to examine the data, most would not have taken the time to do so. The facilitator was important in answering questions, but also seemed to provide the impetus perhaps needed in order to schedule a meeting. As the participants discussed the data, themes developed beyond the questionnaire.

Data Graphs Preferred Over Data Tables. The participants of the study received both the data tables (Appendix B) and data graphs (Appendix C). Data graphs were preferred in all the sites and by the majority of the participants. Graphs were described as easier and quicker to examine and understand. Many of the teachers said that they would never have taken the time to look at the data tables if that was all they had received. A few of the participants, (directors and coordinators) said that they would have examined data tables, but would have done so to answer more detailed questions they might have had. Even the participants that would have looked at the data tables said that they wanted a presentation with graphs prior to examining the tables.

Personalize the Data. Participants in four of the five sites discussed the need to personalize the data in order to connect their students to the numbers, thereby connecting outcomes to programs. “We have to know the students and their stories to tie it (the data) to programs, or lack of programs. That will tell us what to do” (coordinator, Cherry School District).

“Stories” was used to describe personifying the data in all four of these sites. This was described as the “heart part” (teacher, Falcon School District). The data became personal to the participants when they heard the stories, either by conducting the interviews themselves or hearing these stories from those who did. Hearing the stories allowed teachers to know the numbers as their students.

Those who conducted the interviews described the process as “powerful” (teacher, Creekview School District). Persons who conducted the interviews not only said that doing so personalized the data for them, but because of that activity, they would more carefully examine the data. Participants that conducted the interviews said that it was “theirs” and that they would “definitely read all of this, it means something to me since I made the phone calls” (teacher, Oakfield School District).

Low Number of Graduates. Participants in four of the five districts expressed concern and surprise regarding the number of special education graduates. Their perception was that this number was lower than the number of students in special education in lower grade levels and that it reflected a high drop-out rate. None of the participants in these sites knew what the drop-out rate for special education students was, but said that these data were important for planning purposes and program

decisions. “The most important number to me is the drop-out rate” (teacher, Creekview School District).

In these four sites, discussion of drop-out rates led to a discussion of lack of high school programs for these students and developed into a discussion of lack of high school programs particularly for students with mild disabilities.

High School Programs Conflict with Transition Services. The participants discussed this general theme over half the time of the focus group meeting in all five sites. The focus group discussion concluded with this theme in all of the sites and likely would have continued if more time were available. Participants left the focus group discussing this topic in each of the five meetings. Participants in all five sites identified lack of curricular options, including vocational and functional classes, as a concern in their efforts to provide transition services for students in special education. The participants expressed a need for classes, curriculum and programs that provided students functional work and life skills, and connected them to the community and occupations of interest.

In addition to few options for these students, teachers, coordinators and directors in four of the five districts described the tension or “discrepancy between a college-prep, credit-driven model of high school and transition plans and services that meet the needs of students in special education” (special education director, Falcon School District). Resource room teachers expressed this “struggle to get them to fit the transition piece, but, more importantly, the diploma” (teacher, Oaksfield School District). Participants in Crest School District did not discuss this issue, but there were no resource room teachers at the focus group meeting. The teachers were

vocational specialists and were responsible in providing transition services to a small number of students in the district. Four of the five districts identified high stakes testing (WASL) and school reform efforts to raise academic standards as increasing the tension they felt between high school general education requirements and transition services. None of the participants suggested that passing the WASL was necessary or even relevant for their students, but proposed the opposite.

Teachers were not optimistic about students in special education passing the WASL. “You don’t think when the bar is raised, that our kids will either leave or cause big problems? Of course. We are not providing equal opportunities, only equal demands through these tests” (teacher, Cherry School District).

Adult Agency Connections. Developing stronger connections to adult agencies was identified as a target for improvement in two of the sites. Although this was not discussed in the other three sites, participants in these two sites acted upon the suggestions brought forth in the focus group meeting. Practice and policy were addressed in both districts in the form of training and IEP paperwork and verification.

Discussion of Data Use in Cross-Case Analysis

The activities based on the follow-up data that were reported for each site are presented in Table 4.7. These activities were sorted across cases into three categories: 1) dissemination of the follow-up data to others; 2) changes in policy and procedures; 3) curricular changes or modifications in the high school or classroom. The number of activities reported by the school districts were: Cherry (5); Creekview (5); Falcon (4); Oakfield (3); and Crest (1).

Table 5.2 Data Use from Cross-Case Analysis

| Activity | Level | | Documentation | District | | | | |
|---|-------|---|--|----------|---|---|---|---|
| | A | C | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Disseminate results of follow-up study. | A | T | | | | | | |
| District newsletter. | X | | Newsletter | x | x | x | | |
| Presentation to district administrators. | X | | Handouts. | | x | x | | |
| Presentation to students. | | x | Handouts, overheads. | | | x | | |
| Presentation to departments. | | x | Handouts. | | | | | x |
| Policy and procedures. | A | T | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Training and review of IEP agency linkages. | X | x | Second verification. | | | | x | |
| Develop connections to post-secondary training. | X | x | Draft of document, second verification. | | | | | x |
| Develop new documents, forms for transition. | X | x | Draft of document, second verification. | x | x | | | x |
| Review and address graduation policies. | X | | Notes from meeting, second verification. | x | x | | | x |
| Develop continuum of transition services. | X | x | Draft of document, second verification. | x | x | | | x |
| Curricular planning and development. | A | T | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Staff meeting to discuss data and program changes for next year. | X | x | Notes from meeting, second verification. | x | x | | | x |
| Collect information from all secondary special educators in survey regarding program changes. | | x | Survey, second verification. | | x | | | |
| Classroom presentation on 1999 follow-up study. | | | Overheads, handouts, student survey. | | | | x | |
| Classroom presentation on agency linkages. | | x | Handouts, second verification. | | | | | x |

Districts: Oakfield (1); Falcon (2); Creekview (3); Crest (4); Cherry (5). Position in district: A (administrator); C (coordinator); T (teacher)

Discussion of Research Questions

This study was conducted to investigate the use of post-school follow-up data by local district personnel and provide suggestions for how to best support this use for data dissemination. The participants of this study provided tentative answers to these questions as well as posed questions for further thought and study.

Policy-makers in Washington State have mandated the use of post-school status data for special education graduates as a means to measure and evaluate programs (OSPI, 2000), therefore it is important to investigate whether or not these data are used for such purposes. The participants in this study evaluated their programs and made changes related to the examination of the follow-up data. Yet it is unlikely that these activities would have occurred without the intervention of this study. The events (presentation of data, focus group discussions, and individual interviews) related to this study provided the participants with the opportunities and time to examine, plan and take action based on the follow-up data.

The importance of understanding and accounting for the context of this study is critical to understanding the meaning of the results in case study research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The findings of this study are shaped by the context of high schools in the midst of standards-based reform and increasingly high academic standards. The findings that emerged from this study provided answers to the research questions and suggestions for practices at the state, district and building level that supports the use of follow-up data.

Findings Related to Who Should Examine the Data. The people who examined the follow-up data in this study were a small subgroup of people who

should participate in the examination and use of these data for program decisions.

The majority of the focus group participants were special education directors, secondary special education coordinators, and special education teachers (56 of 62 people). Although general educators and principals were invited to participate in the focus group meeting, only five principals attended in two of the school districts. A school psychologist, one adult service provider, and a school-to-work coordinator participated in focus group meetings.

The participants of this study recommended that many other people examine these data, particularly principals. Others suggested by the participants included: superintendents; curriculum specialists; assessment specialists; general education high school teachers; special education high school, middle school and elementary teachers; guidance counselors; vocational directors; vocational teachers; adult agency service providers; college disability coordinators; parents and students.

Findings Related to How the Data Should be Presented. The participants preferred meeting with colleagues and a facilitator to examine these data. This provided both designated time and the opportunity to reflect and discuss the follow-up data. Participants were clear that the follow-up data must be provided in a format that was easily understood, or they would not take time to examine it. Graphs were preferred over data tables.

In addition to how the data should be presented, participants provided information regarding how data should be collected. There is a need for the educators to personalize the data, connecting the numbers to the students and their programs. One method to increase the likelihood of this occurring is for special education

teachers to collect these data through telephone interviews with the parents or graduates. Providing the protocols to the group examining the data was also suggested as a method to assist teachers to personalize the data.

Findings Related to Data Use. The participants in this study considered follow-up data to be important for making program modifications. Actions were taken during this study related to the examination of these data. These actions were: 1) dissemination of the results of the follow-up study; 2) policy and procedures in (a) agency linkages, (b) connections to post-secondary training, (c) graduation policy, (d) continuum of transition services, and (e) curricular planning and development (Table 4.7).

While these activities are encouraging, it appears that it was not the follow-up data as much as the discussions at the focus group meeting that promoted these changes. Participants stated that without the opportunity and time to examine and discuss these data with a facilitator and their colleagues, it was unlikely they would have examined the data or used these for program modifications.

Implications of the Findings

Measurable student outcome data, both academic and post-school status, are increasingly significant in high schools across Washington. School reform policy and special education policy instruct school district personnel to collect these data in order to measure the extent of interventions to increase academic and post-school outcomes. Researchers and policy makers use these data for program evaluation. Findings from this study suggest that post-school status data won't be used at the local level for program evaluation without intervention.

Current state policy to improve the post-school performance of students in special education as measured by follow-up data does not address the context in which teachers work. Teachers described a tension between providing transition services for their students that are a “coordinated set of activities that included instruction, vocational education and training, and community experiences that promotes movement to post-school activities” (IDEA, 1997), and assuring that these students attain the necessary credits in general education classes that they to receive a diploma. There is little time to provide transition services and there are few options in the high school setting, particularly for students with mild disabilities, to do so.

This study provides information that suggests methods to support and increase the possibility of local school personnel using follow-up data for program modifications and to build capacity to use these data in future studies.

Implications Regarding Data Collection and Examination

Tables of post-school follow-up data will likely not be examined or used if provided to school personnel in isolation. These numbers need to represent students and the stories of their post-school status in order for teachers and other district personnel to relate the outcomes to their high school programs. Every effort should be made to assist teachers in collecting the data. Dividing the graduates among special education teachers and coordinators (such as occurred in Creekview School District) provided each person with a manageable number of cases in which to collect data. After the data is analyzed at OSPI, the protocols are returned to the district and should be examined and discussed along with the follow-up data.

Teachers need time to examine, reflect and use these data for planning purposes. The strongest recommendation from the participants was to be provided the opportunity to discuss these data with colleagues. A facilitator was identified as important to this process, not only to present the data and answer questions, but perhaps give significance to scheduling a time and place for such a meeting.

Data should be presented in a format that is easily understood and quickly perused. Data graphs were the preference for the majority of the participants. Currently, data tables are used to present the data to local districts. These tables are still necessary, but participants said that they would use these for additional information or to find more specific data.

Efforts should be made to increase the number of general educators, particularly high school principals and vice-principals to examine these data. Special education directors should present these data at administrative meetings, insuring that principals are knowledgeable of the data and have the opportunity to discuss these data with colleagues.

District leaders are needed to facilitate and support the collection, examination and use of follow-up data in their schools. Efforts should be made to develop these leaders by sharing information about follow-up studies at state and district level meetings. OSPI should target special education administrators and assist them in developing plans to participate in the follow-up study. The state special education director should discuss and share the follow-up data at state level meetings as vigorously and deliberately as the state superintendent has shared the WASLs (OSPI, 1999). Personnel from the transition state-needs project (Center for Change in

Transition Services) could present these data at regional meetings for district special education directors, assisting them in planning for data collection, examination, and use.

Implications Regarding Data Use for Program Modifications

Findings from this study suggest that school district personnel would not examine the follow-up data without intervention, and neither will district personnel use these data for program modification without the opportunity to examine, discuss and plan during additional meetings.

Activities relating to program changes, policy and procedures occurred after additional planning meetings. For the follow-up data to be used for program change, opportunities must be provided to support further planning. District level leaders are needed to facilitate additional meetings for discussion and use of these data. For program modification to move beyond special education, principals should participate in this work.

Implications for State Policy-Makers

OSPI policy recommends a statewide measure of post-school outcomes as a way for local practitioners to evaluate and improve current programs for successful transition services (Furney, et al, 1997; OSPI, 2000). State policy-makers should develop a process that identifies and increases a rate and timeline for district participation in collecting follow-up data. Specific plans to reach these goals should be implemented. Efforts must be made to assure that administrators, including superintendents, principals and special educators, are aware that post-school status data exists and these data are a measure of a school districts' success. After

information is shared and training and support is offered to local districts special education contracts should be tied to data collection.

Funding should be available for continued analysis of the data by a research analyst at OSPI. The data collection and dissemination of these data should be facilitated at OSPI. The Center for Change in Transition Services (OSPI State-Needs Project) should continue and expand efforts to encourage and support districts in collecting these data. Center staff can provide information and training to develop and support leaders at the local level that are knowledgeable and supportive of data collection, examination and use.

Collection, examination and use of follow-up data should be infused in the statewide efforts to support promising practices in high school programs for students in special education. Funds should be provided to districts to assist in the collection of follow-up data. These funds might be based on the number of completed interviews that district personnel conduct and return to OSPI.

People are needed from across the state that understand the follow-up data and who can assist districts in examining and using these data. Regional teams of school district personnel can be developed to achieve these goals. Teams selected for this work should be knowledgeable about their own district's follow-up data, experienced in discussing the uses of these data, and participate at the state level in further training opportunities. These teams could act as mentors to districts within their region by assisting staff in collecting, examining and using these data for program modifications. Financial incentives may be needed to support awareness of post-school status data for general educators, awareness and training for special education

directors, training and release time for regional teams, and data collection at the local level.

Implications for Researchers

The conclusions reached in this study provide a framework for further research and additional research is needed in order to deepen understanding in the use of follow-up data.

The suggestions for the presentation and format of follow-up data are preliminary and must be further tested by widening the sample. Although these suggestions were derived from the majority of responses from the 62 participants in this study, there are many questions that still need answering. For example, there are questions to be answered regarding differences among large urban schools, suburban schools and small or rural schools.

Further research should address agency connections. It was noted on the IEPs that 55% of students in special education needed connections to adult service agencies. Of those students, only 34% made connections with adult agencies. Although most of the participants described the rate of agency connection as an area in which improvement was needed, there was contradictory point of view posed by a teacher. He suggested that a low rate of agency connection should be considered a positive outcome. Perhaps agency support after high school is not needed for some youth with disabilities, but further investigation is needed to explore this matter. Questions should explore the process school use to identify agencies, the planning involved in deciding if a student will need agency support, efforts to build these connections while in high school, and how these connections relate to disability.

Principals were most often mentioned as persons that needed to examine and use these data for program decisions, yet few principals participated in this study. Research is needed to confirm that suggestions proposed in this study are useful for principals and to investigate how they use these data.

Questions should be answered regarding how best to encourage special education teachers to collect the data. A strong recommendation from this study is that special education teachers conduct the interviews to collect the follow-up data. Further research is needed in order to determine how to involve teachers. The information gathered in this study does not clarify what will persuade teachers to spend time conducting telephone interviews with parents and students.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations of this study. The first is related to the selection of cases. The study sample is a sample of convenience rather than a sample from the domain of possible districts in Washington State. The districts that participated in this study were selected based on their willingness to participate and their history with the follow-up project. These districts may represent those most willing to use data to make program revisions.

Staff in all the districts had a previous working relationship with the researcher. The district staff knew the researcher as a specialist in transition services. This relationship may have influenced the participants' focus group discussion and individual interviews. Although this relationship may have fostered trust from the participants for the researcher, it also may have influenced the participants in their desire to please the researcher in the discussion.

There is a limitation related to the research questions. Questions used on the focus group interview forms may have suggested outcomes for participants that would not have occurred without this structure. These questions may have limited the range of issues considered by the participants.

Time factors are another limitation of this study. Additional time could have been used for further interviews, surveys and site visits to truly understand the intricacies of the use of follow-up data in the context of high schools. The time spent in focus group discussions and individual interviews provides a limited view of the thoughts and actions of school personnel in relation to follow-up data. In addition to the total time spent with each participant, the time frame for this study is a limitation in identifying actions taken by the participants. It is unknown if the plans reported by the districts during the individual interviews were later implemented.

The numbers and roles of participants in this study were small compared to the numbers of educators in Washington. The 62 participants (most were special educators) provided information helpful in examining the use of follow-up data in additional districts throughout the state, but the results cannot be generalized to other districts or educators.

Although high school principals were most often mentioned as people that needed to examine these data, and were invited to participate in this study, only five principals did so. Lack of participation by principals and vice-principals in this study is a limitation and should be addressed in future studies. Special education personnel dominated the focus groups. The results of this study were gathered from special educators. General education teachers, principals and vice-principals may have

different perceptions about these data. Parents and students were also recommended as persons needing to examine these data, therefore it is important that they are invited to be participants in future research.

Finally, there are limitations related to the procedures used to analyze these data. Within-case and cross-case analyses using matrices as a means to develop and support emerging themes were appropriate for an initial exploratory study on the use of follow-up data but, rather than a single researcher, a team of researchers would have enhanced the study by providing data cross checks and further addressing reliability issues.

Conclusions

Collecting, analyzing and disseminating post-school status data for special education graduates in Washington State can be a costly and time-consuming effort. If post-school status data are used to measure the extent to which specific interventions have been successful (OSPI, 1999), then it is important to assure that districts use these data to make program modifications.

The districts in this study represent a best-case sample in that the participants had previous experience and knowledge regarding transition services and post-school outcome data, and a professional relationship with the researcher. Because these educators indicated difficulties in examining and using the data without the intervention of this study, it is proposed that districts that have less experience and are less receptive to participation in such a study will find it even more difficult to make use of these data for program modifications.

OSPI should develop and maintain the structure needed for data collection and analysis. This includes the development of the protocol for the interviews and demographics, timelines for collection and dissemination, and the oversight of the project. Following data analysis, OSPI should support personnel to prepare summaries and present these data to district teams.

Special education directors must commit to the project by agreeing to collect post-school status data, developing procedures for special education teachers to collect and examine the data, and disseminate these data to other administrators in the district for examination. The director should provide the leadership and time for group discussions to occur around these data. The director should lead efforts to modify programs for students in special education based on these data.

High school special education teachers should collect these data through telephone interviews. They need to examine and discuss these data with colleagues and make program modifications based on the results.

These suggestions may result in changes in special education services, but additional work needs to take place for changes to occur in secondary programs. A state-level discussion is necessary to address the conflicting goals of the standards-based reform movement with increasingly high academic standards and transition services for students with disabilities. Rather than parallel policies of school reform and post-school status, compatible policies should be discussed and developed.

Within special education, the goal to increase the post-school status of youth with disabilities seems sensible as a way to evaluate programs, address curricula needs, and measure success (Furney, Hasazi, Destefano, 1997; Phelps & Hanley-

Maxwell, 1997). Efforts to collect, disseminate, examine and use follow-up data for students in special education should be coordinated with general education as a measure of success for the high school program rather than special education alone.

Special education policy at the state level embraces access to the general education curriculum and participation in the WASL, while adding the standard of increasing post-school outcome status for students with disabilities. These policies are in conflict in high schools where there are limited programs for students that are not college-bound. While increasing the participation of special education students assures that these youth will not be left behind in the move toward academic excellence, post-school outcomes should carry additional weight as a measure of state, district and program success. Increasing graduation rates for students in special education should also be included in these measures.

A three-pronged measure of success is needed for schools across the state. These would include measures of academic success (WASL), post-school status outcomes, and graduation rates. These standards would provide the state and districts with a broader picture of local efforts, and promote individual measures of success for youth with disabilities.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Agenda

- 1. Introductions and purpose of the meeting.**
- 2. Agreement to participate in the study.**
- 3. Distribution of questionnaire to participants (Appendix D).**
- 4. Presentation of follow-up data for the 1999 special education graduates from the district (slide presentation, Appendix C).**
- 5. Following presentation of the data, participants complete the questionnaire.**
- 6. Questionnaire is presented to group and each item is discussed.**
- 7. As the group raises additional topics, open-ended discussion occurs.**

Appendix B

OSPI Data Table Example

Frequencies

Statistics

| Diploma | | |
|---------|---------|----|
| N | Valid | 57 |
| | Missing | 34 |

Table A1. Special Education Students, by Diploma, Creekview School District, 1999

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 54 | 59.3 | 94.7 | 94.7 |
| | No | 3 | 3.3 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 57 | 62.6 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | Unk | 34 | 37.4 | | |
| Total | | 91 | 100.0 | | |

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Disability Status * Diploma | 57 | 62.6% | 34 | 37.4% | 91 | 100.0% |

A2. Special Education Students, by Disability Status, by Diploma, Creekview School District

| | | | Diploma | | Total |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|--------|--------|
| | | | Yes | No | |
| Disability Status | Serious behavioral disability | Count | | 1 | 1 |
| | | % within Disability Status | | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | Health impairments | Count | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | | % within Disability Status | 80.0% | 20.0% | 100.0% |
| | Specific learning disabilities | Count | 32 | | 32 |
| | | % within Disability Status | 100.0% | | 100.0% |
| | Mental retardation | Count | 15 | 1 | 16 |
| | | % within Disability Status | 93.8% | 6.3% | 100.0% |
| | Multiple disabilities | Count | 2 | | 2 |
| | | % within Disability Status | 100.0% | | 100.0% |
| | Hearing impairments | Count | 1 | | 1 |
| | | % within Disability Status | 100.0% | | 100.0% |
| Total | | Count | 54 | 3 | 57 |
| | | % within Disability Status | 94.7% | 5.3% | 100.0% |

Crosstabs**Case Processing Summary**

| | Cases | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Gender * Diploma | 57 | 62.6% | 34 | 37.4% | 91 | 100.0% |

Table A3. Special Education Students, by Gender, by Diploma, Creekview School District, 1999

| | | | Diploma | | Total |
|--------|--------|-----------------|---------|-------|--------|
| | | | Yes | No | |
| Gender | Female | Count | 20 | 3 | 23 |
| | | % within Gender | 87.0% | 13.0% | 100.0% |
| | Male | Count | 34 | | 34 |
| | | % within Gender | 100.0% | | 100.0% |
| Total | | Count | 54 | 3 | 57 |
| | | % within Gender | 94.7% | 5.3% | 100.0% |

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Race/Ethnicity * Diploma | 57 | 62.6% | 34 | 37.4% | 91 | 100.0% |

Table A4. Special Education Students, by Race/Ethnicity, by Diploma, Creekview School District, 1999

| | Race/Ethnicity | | Diploma | | Total |
|----------|-------------------------|--|---------|------|--------|
| | | | Yes | No | |
| Nonwhite | Count | | 5 | | 5 |
| | % within Race/Ethnicity | | 100.0% | | 100.0% |
| White | Count | | 49 | 3 | 52 |
| | % within Race/Ethnicity | | 94.2% | 5.8% | 100.0% |
| Total | Count | | 54 | 3 | 57 |
| | % within Race/Ethnicity | | 94.7% | 5.3% | 100.0% |

Frequencies

Statistics

Interview Completed

| | | |
|---|---------|----|
| N | Valid | 91 |
| | Missing | 0 |

Table A5. Special Education Students, by Interview Completed, Creekview School District, 1999

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 56 | 61.5 | 61.5 | 61.5 |
| | No | 35 | 38.5 | 38.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 91 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Disability Status * Interview Completed | 91 | 100.0% | 0 | .0% | 91 | 100.0% |

6. Special Education Students, by Disability Status, by Interview Completed, Creekview :
District, 1999

| | | | Interview Completed | | Total |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| | | | Yes | No | |
| Disability Status | Serious behavioral disability | Count | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | 33.3% | 66.7% | 100.0% |
| | Health impairments | Count | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | 87.5% | 12.5% | 100.0% |
| | Specific learning disabilities | Count | 28 | 27 | 55 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | 50.9% | 49.1% | 100.0% |
| | Mental retardation | Count | 18 | 3 | 21 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | 85.7% | 14.3% | 100.0% |
| | Multiple disabilities | Count | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | 66.7% | 33.3% | 100.0% |
| | Hearing impairments | Count | | 1 | 1 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Total | | Count | 56 | 35 | 91 |
| | | % within Disability Statu | 61.5% | 38.5% | 100.0% |

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Gender * Interview Completed | 91 | 100.0% | 0 | .0% | 91 | 100.0% |

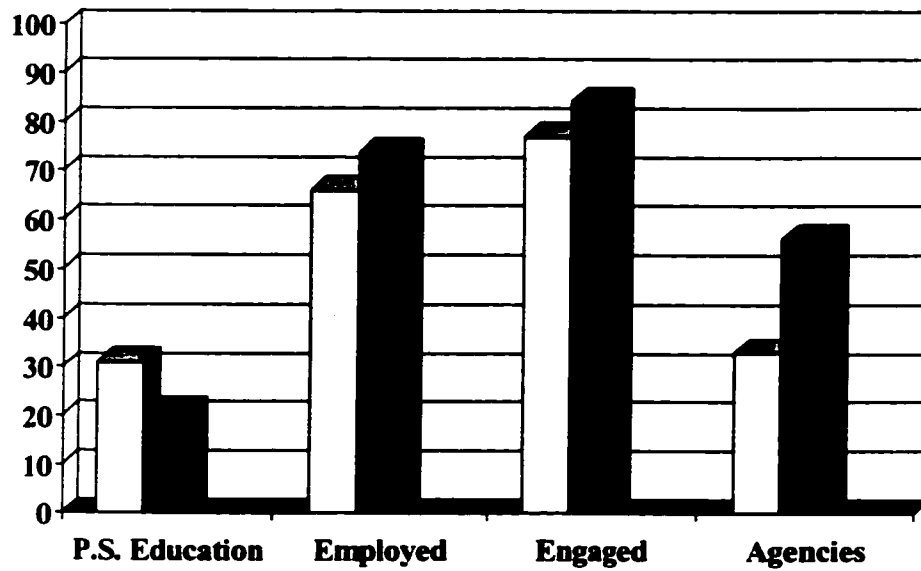
Table A7. Special Education Students, by Gender, by Interview Completed, Creekview School District, 1999

| | | | Interview Completed | | Total |
|--------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|-------|--------|
| | | | Yes | No | |
| Gender | Female | Count | 25 | 13 | 38 |
| | | % within Gender | 65.8% | 34.2% | 100.0% |
| | Male | Count | 31 | 22 | 53 |
| | | % within Gender | 58.5% | 41.5% | 100.0% |
| Total | | Count | 56 | 35 | 91 |
| | | % within Gender | 61.5% | 38.5% | 100.0% |

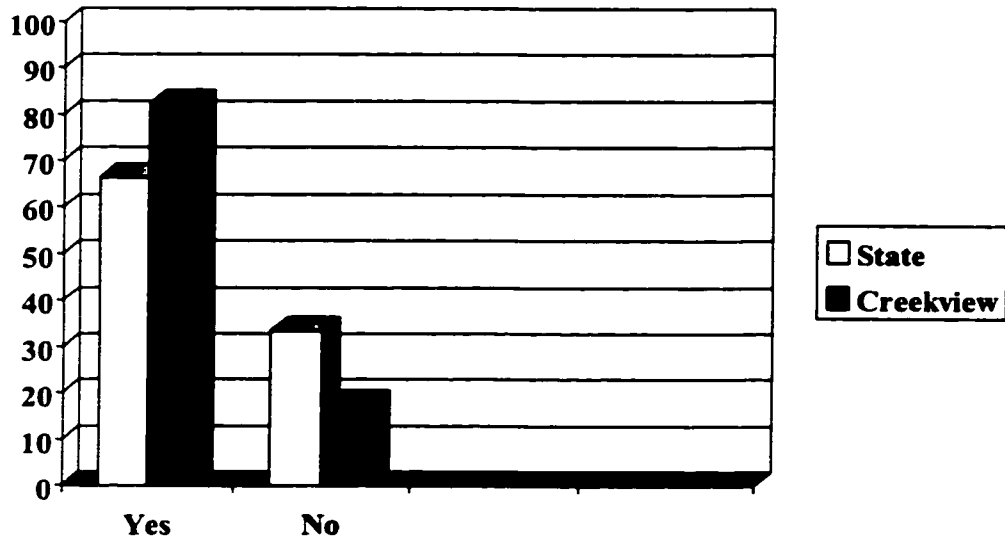
Appendix C

Slide Presentation: Data Graphs

1998 Follow-Up Data: Performance Objectives



Employed ^{a-10}



Engaged: Post-Secondary and/or Employed_{a-19}



Appendix D
Questionnaire: Focus Group

Position in District _____

How long in education? _____

1. **Would you have looked at the data tables prior to this meeting? Why or why not?**
2. **As you look at and listen to this presentation, were there any data that particularly caught your eye? Which were they and why?**
3. **Who else do you think should be at this meeting?**
4. **How do you think this person might use the follow-up data?**
5. **How do you prefer these data presented? (Table, written report, slides, oral presentation, graphs, other?)**
6. **How would you like to see these data sorted or disaggregated?**
7. **Are there other ways you would like to see these data sorted? If so, how?**
8. **Are there ways that these data were sorted that you don't care about?**
9. **Which data were most important to you and why?**
10. **How might you use these data?**

Appendix E**Interview: Individual**

Position in district: _____

1. Since the focus group meeting, have you looked at the data tables again?
If so, what? If not, why not?
2. Have you shared the data with anyone? If yes, who? How did you share these data?
3. Is there anyone else that you feel should see these data? Who?
4. After having time to think about it, are there other data that you need or would like to see?
5. What format do you think would be most helpful for you in thinking about and using these data and why?
6. Have you made any program decisions or changes based on these data since the focus group meeting? If yes, what?
7. Are you planning any changes for next year based on these data? _____ If yes, what?
8. Were these data helpful to you in your work? If yes, in what way
If no, why do you think these data were not useful?
9. Would you want data collected on the graduates in your school for the 1999-2000 school year? Why or why not?

**Curriculum Vitae
Cinda E. Johnson**

Personal Data

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Education and Training

- 2000 **Ed.D.** University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Special Education with specialization in student outcomes, transition services, behavior disorders, educational policy and rehabilitation.
- 1987 **M.A.** Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA. Administration, and Curriculum and Instruction.
- 1978 **B.S.** University of Idaho, Moscow, ID. Special Education and Elementary Education.

Professional Experience

- 1992-present Center for Change in Transition Services, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Systems Specialist.
- 1990-present Adjunct Professor, Seattle Pacific University, Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University.
- 1988-1992 Secondary Special Education Specialist, North Central Education Service District (ESD 171), Wenatchee, WA.
- 1984-1988 Special Education Director, Special Education Teacher, Manson, WA.

Certificates

- 1983- present Washington Education Certificate
- 1983-present Washington Special Education Certificate
- 1981-1986 Arizona Basic Education Certificate
- 1981-1986 Arizona Special Education Certificate
- 1978-1988 Idaho State Teaching Certificate, Special Education Certificate
- 1995-1999 Vocational Counselor, Department of Labor and Industries, Washington
- 1991-present Certified INSIGHT (Vocational) Evaluator, Tucson, Az.

Selected Publications

- Brown, P., Edgar, E., Johnson, C., Prince, S., (2000). Post-school status report: 1999 graduates. Seattle: University of Washington.
- Brown, P., Edgar, E., Johnson, C., Prince, S., (1999). Post-school status report: 1998 graduates. Seattle: University of Washington.
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