In this chapter, you will learn

- Why we need a model of transition support
- How we developed the Transition Support Model
- What is new and unique about *The New Transition Handbook*
- How to use *The New Transition Handbook*

Case Study 1.1 *Wesley Hopkins*

Wesley Hopkins attended a large, rural, consolidated high school during his freshman year. Things just did not seem to click for him there. Back in his hometown of Sharon Springs, he had attended a small elementary school where he knew all the students. He felt comfortable there, and kids did not make fun of him for some of the words he mispronounced or stumbled over in class. School was hard, and his grades were never good, but there was always recess and gym, where he excelled at kickball and baseball. Nobody hit a homer like Wesley. That is when he really shone and could feel good about himself. It got tougher in middle school, though. Classes were harder, he was always in trouble at home because of his grades, and he did not know all of the kids at school anymore. And then there was the teasing every time he gave a botched answer in class or failed another test. It was getting to the point where he did not even want to play sports anymore. Maybe the kids would make fun of him there, too.

Wesley certainly was not looking forward to attending Randolph High School when he finished eighth grade. It was all the way across the valley and brought students from five rural middle schools together. He knew he would be lost. And speaking up and making friends was not really something Wesley felt he knew how to do, especially when he had to change classes and classmates every 50 minutes. Just as he had suspected, Wesley's grades started slipping even more. He was already failing four of his seven classes by the end of the first grading period in October. One of his teachers was talking about referring him to special education, but what was the sense in going to school anyway? It didn't seem worth the effort. Sometimes in the morning, instead of getting on the school bus at the end of the road by his house, Wesley started hiding

in the shed behind the barn and staying all day until school was over. After a while, he never got on the bus to go back to school at all.

THE NEED FOR A MODEL OF SUPPORT THAT WORKS

Open the front section of any local newspaper or talk to any high school teacher or principal and you are reminded that Wesley's story, unfortunately, is not unusual. For many students, high school is not a positive experience leading to a successful transition to adult life. A promising career, satisfying personal relationships, a comfortable home, enjoyable leisure time activities—the expectations many of us hold for adulthood—do not materialize for a sizable number of students who leave high school.

Secondary and Postschool Life Outcomes of Students with Disabilities

Secondary education has not resulted in a successful transition to adulthood for many students, despite growing attention in federal policy, research, and the media (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). Unemployment or underemployment, financial dependence, limited social relationships, segregation, and poverty are the outcomes faced by many students as they leave high school and enter their adult lives (Hughes & Avoke, 2010). For example, Newman et al. (2009) reported that only 31% of youth with intellectual disabilities are employed (primarily part time) after leaving high school, only 7% attend postsecondary education as their sole postschool activity, only 14% live independently or semi-independently, only 26% have a checking account, and only 11% participate in a community group, such as a sports team or church club. Students with disabilities from low-income households also fare more poorly across these same postschool indicators than do their peers from higher income homes. In addition, white youth with disabilities (63%) are more likely to be employed than their black (35%) or Hispanic (54%) counterparts; they are also more likely to hold a skilled labor job and have a checking account (Newman et al., 2009). Unfortunately, job training programs for people with disabilities often target low-paying, part-time, entry-level jobs that offer few benefits or opportunities for promotion or advancement (Metzel, Boeltzig, Butterworth, Sulewski, & Gilmore, 2007), further relegating young people to a life of poverty.

Legislative Initiatives Supporting Secondary Transition

Since the 1990s, key pieces of legislation have addressed the need for improving postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. Three legislative acts with particular relevance for youth with disabilities are the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 (PL 108-446), the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (PL 89-10), which was reauthorized in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (PL 107-110), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (PL 101-336).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IDEA 2004 reiterated the requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 (PL 101-476) and its 1997 amendments (PL 105-17) that students' individualized education programs (IEPs) include a statement of needed transition services before students exit school services. Although the student's age at which this statement must be included in the IEP has fluctuated in the legislation (it is now "not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16," IDEA 2004, § 614), this requirement was substantial because, for the first time, high school teachers were mandated to address students' postschool outcomes, goals, and needed services beginning years before students actually left school (Stodden & Roberts, 2008).

As defined in IDEA 2004, *transition services* is a coordinated set of activities designed "to facilitate the child's movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation" (§ 602). Accordingly, secondary transition personnel must address a wide gamut of postschool outcomes for students across multiple settings—including home, school, work, and employment as appropriate for each student. Furthermore, IDEA 2004 stipulates that transition services must focus on improving students' "academic and functional achievement" (§ 602) and must be based on each student's individual needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. Therefore, not only must educators begin early to address a wide range of student outcomes, but they must also provide transition services that are individualized for each student and responsive to each student's own interests and strengths-implying that students must have a voice in designing their own education programs. Finally, under IDEA 2004, secondary personnel are required to provide a summary of performance to a student who is exiting the education system due to graduating from high school or exceeding the age eligibility. The summary describes the student's achievements and provides recommendations for assisting the student in meeting postsecondary education and employment goals. Under IDEA 2004, therefore, schools are held accountable just short of the actual postschool success of exiting students (Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009).

More important, IDEA 2004 also calls for public schools to be responsive to the changing demographics of the public school population and the disparate in-school and postschool outcomes found across racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. White students represent just 56% of public school students; by 2020, the majority of public school students are estimated to be black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or other ethnicities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006, 2010). In addition, at least 20% of the school population is reported to speak a language other than English at home (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Overidentification for placement in special education programs and high dropout rates persist for some racial and ethnic groups and English language learners, however (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Students of color and those from low-income households also face lower employment and attendance in postsecondary education than their peers from white, middleclass households (Newman et al., 2009). Responding to these challenges, a stated purpose of IDEA 2004 is to ensure equitable allocation of resources, opportunities, and services to improve postschool outcomes for all students with disabilities.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

A major focus of the ESEA was to improve educational and postschool outcomes for students who were underserved or growing up in poverty. The act was reauthorized in 2001 as the NCLB Act (with stated purposes of "meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools" and "closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" [§ 1001]). In addition, ESEA legislation includes students with disabilities as a target population whose needs must be addressed and who are required to participate in statewide assessments—resulting in an increased call for alignment between special education curricula and state and local standards. Indeed, teachers and administrators are held accountable for the achievement of all students because schools must document increases in assessment scores and graduation rates for all subgroups of students, including English language learners, members of racial and ethnic groups, students from high-poverty backgrounds, and students with disabilities. In addition, in concert with IDEA 2004, NCLB authors argued that educational services and supports for students with disabilities are most effective when provided in the general education class and when school personnel hold high expectations for all students.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA, enacted in 1990 and amended in 2008 (PL 110-325), affirmed the basic civil rights of people with disabilities by stating that "physical or mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society" (ADA 2008, § 12101) while arguing that individuals had systematically been denied the opportunity to exercise their rights because of discrimination, prejudice, and segregation. Similar to IDEA 2004 and NCLB, which describe the diminished outcomes experienced by students with disabilities and other groups in part due to unequal opportunities, the ADA states that "census data, national polls, and other studies have documented that people with disabilities, as a group, occupy an inferior status in our society, and are severely disadvantaged socially, vocationally, economically, and educationally" (ADA 2008, § 12101). Consequently, the stated purpose of the ADA is to provide a national mandate to eliminate day-to-day discrimination of children and adults with disabilities. Consistent with IDEA 2004 and NCLB, the ADA of 2008 seeks to correct past inequities with regard to equal treatment and opportunity of people with disabilities and other high-need groups to ensure "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency" (§ 12101).

Transition Support Models

The legislation is explicit in calling for the services and supports needed to improve in-school performance and postschool outcomes of students with disabilities. Positive postschool outcomes are elusive for many, however, despite more than 20 years of transition legislation addressing secondary students with disabilities (Migliore & Butterworth, 2008; Sanford et al., 2011). The premise of this book is that these students require more support than typically is provided by a traditional secondary school curriculum to achieve the adult outcomes that many of us take for granted, such as a job, community involvement, transportation, or a safe and satisfying place to live. The importance of providing support for students as they make the transition from school to adult life has been advocated since the mid-1980s (Halpern, 1985; Will, 1984). Support models that have received attention in the literature include Will's (1984) "bridges" model of school to employment proposed by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS); Halpern's (1985) model of school to "community adjustment"; IDEA 1990, which initially mandated support for the transition from school to a range of postschool adult outcomes; and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (PL 103-239), which addressed employment experiences for youth with and without disabilities.

The Transition Service Integration Model (Certo et al., 2003, 2008) is a more contemporary example of a transition support model in which students with disabilities are served during their final school year by an adult service agency subcontracted with the public schools and authorized to continue to provide postschool support after students leave school, creating a seamless transition from school to adult life. Consistent with the model, students spend their final school year in the community, immersed in work and functional skill-related instruction delivered by a coordinated set of adult service agencies and community employers in collaboration with the school district. During the first 5 years of implementation of the program (1998- 2002), 261 of the 293 students served during their final school year (89%) exited with continued support provided by the same adult agency that served them in school. In addition, 60% of students left school already employed (Certo et al., 2008).

The New Transition Handbook: A Model of Transition Support

Although the scope of the previous models differs, each was designed to match the type and intensity of support to students' individual needs. The models are based on the assumption that students need varying amounts of support to fully participate in general education and the community during their transition from school to adult life (Thompson, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2010). For example, support strategies might include a co-worker giving a student a ride to work, a peer helping a student with limited use of her hands to eat lunch, or a vocational rehabilitation counselor assisting a student to develop a résumé. In The New Transition Handbook, we define *support strategies* as any assistance or help provided directly to a student to promote a successful transition from school to adult life.

Research offers some insight into factors that may promote successful student outcomes, such as paid work experiences during high school, family involvement, social skills instruction, inclusion in general education, and community-based instruction (Test et al., 2009). The field cannot ignore findings, however, that show that secondary education has not led to successful adulthood for many special education students. In an era of shrinking funding allocated for disability programs (Klein, 2011), it is important to provide teachers with effective strategies to improve postschool outcomes for their students. *The New Transition Handbook* provides a model of support for secondary students designed to improve their outcomes after high school. A unique feature of *The New Transition Handbook* is that it contains only transition support strategies that are both research based and teacher tested. Although the type and intensity of support that students need to make a smooth transition to adult life will differ according to individual needs, such as a

personal care attendant for a person with quadriplegia or a communication book for a student who is nonverbal, there are strategies appropriate for every student. In addition, the transition support strategies included are those that can be initiated and implemented by one educator in collaboration with others who are interested in a student's life and well-being.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES OF THE TRANSITION SUPPORT MODEL

The New Transition Handbook provides an innovative approach to the transition process by focusing on both the supports and skills a student needs to experience successful outcomes in adult life. It represents a new approach to the way educators think about students with diverse abilities and students at risk of poor postschool outcomes. Educational supports, which are services and assistance individually tailored to promote successful educational outcomes for students, is a concept that is just coming of age in the field. The emphasis is on maximizing the "fit" between the student and the environment by providing the supports needed for a student to meaningfully participate in everyday life activities both in and outside of school (Thompson et al., 2010).

The New Transition Handbook is an iteration of the first edition of the book, *The Transition Handbook* (Hughes & Carter, 2000). The development of *The Transition Handbook* was a 5-year process involving both researchers and practitioners (Hughes, Hwang, et al., 1997; Hughes & Kim, 1998; Hughes, Kim, et al., 1997). Evidence-based transition practices were identified from a comprehensive review of the transition literature and arranged as a proposed model of transition support. A national survey of the transition research community established the acceptability of the model by the field. Secondary transition teachers throughout the state of Tennessee were then asked to provide input on the practicality of the model. An updated version of the Transition Support Model that resulted is shown in Table 1.1. Teachers also provided more than 500 ways they implemented the support strategies in their own transition programs. These strategies were then compiled and became *The Transition Handbook*.

Why a New Edition of *The Transition Handbook?*

Much has happened in education since the first publication of *The Transition Handbook*. New legislation has had profound effects on secondary transition, including an increased emphasis on accountability, postschool outcomes, academic performance, access to general education, and basic civil rights of students with disabilities. Furthermore, the demographics of public schools have radically changed to a more racially, ethnically, economically, and

culturally diverse student population. Teachers face growing challenges accommodating increasing numbers of students from high-poverty backgrounds. High school reform movements—from small learning communities to online classes in strip malls—have changed the very nature of the high school day for many students and teachers. In addition, the research base has continued to grow, providing additional insights into transition practices demonstrated to work for youth with disabilities (e.g., Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Test et al., 2009). Although the first edition of *The Transition Handbook* continued to be well received, we felt strongly that we needed to update the text to address the changes that have occurred since 2000. The result is *The New Transition Handbook,* which incorporates current legislative initiatives, educational movements and reforms, and recent research.

What Is Unique About *The New Transition Handbook*

Unique features of the Transition Support Model and *The New Transition Handbook* are as follows.

- o We have written The New Transition Handbook with many readers in mind: preservice teachers, middle or high school teachers, students, parents and family members, friends, employers, job coaches, and service providers of students who need support in making the transition from school to adult life.
- o The strategies teachers shared are applicable for the breadth of students attending today's schools, including those with disabilities, such as physical impairments, intellectual disabilities, emotional/behavior disorders, autism, or sensory impairments. They also are relevant for students at risk for poor school performance or school dropout; students from high-poverty backgrounds; students who are ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse; and students who are English language learners.
- o *The New Transition Handbook* is hands on, user friendly, and solution oriented. Practical examples, case studies, and reproducible forms are provided to illustrate the hundreds of easy-to-use secondary transition strategies embedded throughout. Blank copies of all forms are provided on the accompanying CD-ROM for readers' own use. We chose a presentation format from which teachers, in collaboration with others, may pick and choose strategies to use based on a student's individual support needs, strengths, and preferences.
- o The Transition Support Model is the product of more than 5 years of model program development involving both researchers and teachers. The strategies composing the model are unique because they are both research based and drawn directly from teachers practicing in the field.

- o Strategies in *The New Transition Handbook* can be implemented by individual teachers themselves in collaboration with family members, employers, service providers, and others who are important in a student's life. The transition strategies do not require a major financial investment or education reform to implement.

LAYOUT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The New Transition Handbook is organized according to the Transition Support Model, which comprises two main goals: 1) developing supports that enhance participation and 2) teaching skills that promote success. Six areas of student support fall under these two goals and provide a conceptual framework for the teacher-suggested support strategies that compose the model. These strategies are arranged in *The New Transition Handbook* according to the six areas of student support. *The New Transition Handbook* is also organized into three main sections designed for easy access for readers.

Section I

Section I introduces The New Transition Handbook and Transition Support Model approach to secondary transition. Chapter 1 describes the need for and development of the Transition Support Model. It also describes the innovative and unique features and organization and use of The New Transition Handbook. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the assessment and planning process used to identify student supports and skills within the framework of the Transition Support Model.

Section II

Section II contains support strategies related to the first main goal of the Transition Support Model—developing supports that enhance participation. Fortunately, a deficit model of student support, in which a student must be "fixed" in response to demands of the environment, is losing favor within the field of education. This model is being replaced by a more socialecological approach in which the environment is adapted and naturally occurring support is maximized in response to the full array of an individual's needs, strengths, interests, and preferences (e.g., Thompson et al., 2010). Research shows that much support is available in most environments (Hagner, Butterworth, & Keith, 1995). In addition, acceptance of individual differences can be promoted in an everyday setting at work, in school, or in the community, particularly when people with disabilities are viewed as competent (Siperstein, Parker, Bardon, & Widaman, 2007). The strategies in Section II allow teachers to gain access to and maximize support in an environment, as well as develop social

support and acceptance in settings in which they are lacking, in order to promote students' full participation in daily activities both in and outside school.

Chapter 3 discusses strategies for increasing environmental support. These include gaining access to existing environmental support, developing environmental support plans, and modifying settings to promote meaningful participation. Chapter 4 contains strategies for increasing social support, such as developing social support plans, communicating social support needs, and gaining access to existing social support. This chapter also presents strategies for promoting social acceptance by communicating an attitude of acceptance, promoting diversity awareness, and teaching skills that promote acceptance.

Section III

Section III contains four chapters related to the second main goal of the support model—teaching skills that promote success. Competence relates to skill performance—individuals are more readily accepted into school, work, and community settings when they are viewed as competent by performing expected skills (Walker et al., 2011; Wolfensberger, 1983). Being competent also allows people to have access to many benefits, such as job advancement, educational opportunities, and satisfying relationships. Competence is judged within the context of an environment, which is consistent with a social-ecological model of human behavior (Thompson et al., 2010). Being considered competent in one context, such as consistently hitting home runs on a baseball team, does not mean that the same person would be considered competent in another context, such as being a member of a spacecraft launching crew. Skill performance and competence must be promoted, supported, accepted, and maintained within an environment (Agran, Wehmeyer, Cavin, & Palmer, 2010). The strategies in Section III help teachers to build the competence of students within everyday settings and to teach skills and arrange environments to support and promote skill maintenance.

Chapter 5 describes strategies for increasing students' independent performance and selfdetermination by teaching self-determination skills and incorporating self-determination opportunities into daily life. This chapter also contains strategies for increasing students' choice and decision making. Chapter 6 focuses on strategies for teaching social interaction skills and promoting relationships with peers in school, on the job, in college, or in recreational settings. Chapter 7 provides strategies for enhancing students' academic performance and functional skill repertoire. This chapter includes methods for increasing students' active participation in general education classes and

activities. Chapter 8 emphasizes strategies for teaching employment and work-related skills and skills that promote students' full participation in the community.

SUMMARY

Our intent in writing *The New Transition Handbook* is that it be solid and research based yet accessible to and maximally useful to readers. Our primary audience is teachers, family members, service providers, and others interested in providing support to secondary students as they make the transition from school to adult life. Ultimately, however, our primary focus is young people like Wesley Hopkins, who are not experiencing the outcomes all people value—a meaningful career, close relationships, and everyday enjoyment—when they leave high school. It is our hope that all students who need it will be served by the Transition Support Model found in *The New Transition Handbook*—one that develops support in a student's environment and increases a student's individual skills and competence so that all students will experience productive, satisfying, and healthy adult outcomes.