

Guest Editor Comments

It was 18 years ago that the transition movement was set in motion by Madeleine Will, Commissioner, U.S. Department of Education. Several years thereafter, transition was declared a national priority and its mission then was the same as it is today, which is to prepare our youth with disabilities for a successful transition from school to work and community life.

The State of Alabama, an active participant in this mission from the beginning, has come to assume a profile of commitment, which in turn has led to a performance of quality. Evidence to this effect is reflected in the words of Dr. William Halloran, OSER's Transition Officer for the U.S. Department of Education. In 2001, he sent his greetings from Washington D.C. to Alabama's transition stakeholders, writing:

"I am quite familiar with many of the transition activities in your state . . . [therefore] I was not surprised when the National Transition Alliance recognized, in 1999, your Alabama Transition Initiative as one of the most promising programs in the country."

This honor is a tribute to all who have invested in our youths with disabilities and their preparation for productive and responsible lives. It is in this spirit that we present the first special issue of AFCEC's online journal, a window to the progress made by this commitment.

The papers assembled herein are intended to reflect the status of transition in Alabama. These, however, are but a sampling of what has been published. Available elsewhere, for example, are collected papers by practitioners and administrators, as well as a book on the state's transition services, practices and research.¹

Topics for this special issue were selected to show what is characteristic, current, and innovative about transition in Alabama. The first two papers provide the reader with the foundation's of the movement – its definitions, values, goals, and strategies for success. Awareness of the past gives direction to present and future practices, and there is no one better to speak of Alabama's transition history than Dr. Mabrey Whetstone, who pioneered the movement in this state and continues to be its leading administrative force.

The remaining papers center on programs and services, education and training, and practice and research. It is here that the reader is introduced to the state's high school occupational diploma program option, its systems change initiative, its special education and rehabilitation partnership, its curriculum development program for youth with more significant disabilities, its secondary teacher preparation program, its annual transition conference, and its newly established Transition Institute. While each of these elements makes its own contribution, together they significantly advance our abilities to impact the lives of our young people in a positive and lasting way.

¹ Browning, P., Cox, C., Rabren, K., & Tew-Washburn (Eds.) (2001). *Transition in Alabama: Service, training, and research*. Transition Leadership Institute, Auburn University.

The final two papers highlight research. One features a statewide study in which primary stakeholders were surveyed for their opinions and practices across many transition programs and content domains. The other paper is comprised of abstracts for 16 data-based studies, most of which examined the post-school outcomes of Alabama's former special education students. It is data such as this that serves as the ultimate gauge of our performance.

In closing, I hope this special issue – *Transition in Alabama* – serves as a vibrant example of the state's commitment to improve the educational and occupational outcomes of its secondary students with disabilities. On behalf of all who are committed to this journey, thank you AFCEC for this opportunity to widely disseminate this message through your new inexpensive and easily accessible online journal.

Philip Browning, Ph.D.
Guest Editor