

## Alabama Transition Conference

Diane Glanzer<sup>1</sup>



The Alabama Transition Conference offers two and a half days of professional and personal development for transition stakeholders throughout Alabama. This annual event provides a forum through which the participants are able to enhance their knowledge and skills on best practices, learn of exemplary and innovative programs and services, and mutually explore contemporary issues, problems, and solutions relating to the transition process.

The term “transition” in this setting refers to a federally-mandated, coordinated set of activities designed for high school special education students, preparing them to assume young adult roles within their chosen communities. Coordinated by the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, the conference is held near the main campus of Auburn University and attracts over 700 participants, most of whom work in the field of special education, career technical education, or rehabilitation. The conference expands and strengthens the network for all transition stakeholders by also attracting students, parents, advocates, employers, work counselors, agency representatives, post-secondary education advisors, and community and state leaders.

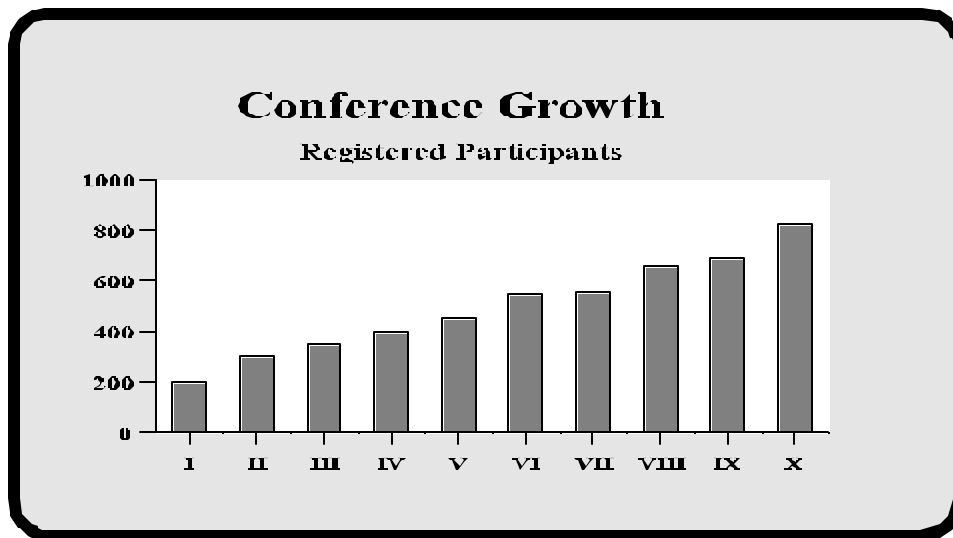
This event marks its thirteenth year with the 2003 conference, March 5-7 at the Auburn University Hotel and Dixon Conference Center. (See end of article to access the *Transition XIII* Web site) The first day of the conference, Wednesday, presents eight full-day, in-depth “pre-conference” workshops, many conducted by nationally and internationally-recognized experts. Attendees may reserve seats at the workshop of their choice. Thursday morning’s opening ceremonies bring everyone together for welcoming statements and the keynote presentation. Dozens of concurrent sessions follow throughout the remainder of Thursday and Friday morning. A Thursday night banquet features a buffet and entertainment. In addition, special events accentuate and define each year—some becoming tradition, such as the hallway displays representing transition around the state, and some breaking new ground, such as the Share Fair planned for 2003.

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The Alabama Transition Conference has a history of interagency collaboration, having been periodically underwritten, in part, by the following: Special Education Services and Career/ Technical Education, Alabama State Department of Education; Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services; Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities; Alabama Department of Mental Health/ Mental Retardation; United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Birmingham; and the College of Education, Auburn University.

The first annual Alabama Transition Conference convened in 1991. Since then, it has grown in attendance each year and has become an Alabama tradition for transition stakeholders throughout the state. *Transition I* had 200 participants; *Transition X*, celebrating the conference’s tenth anniversary in 2000, attracted over 800 participants. In 2002 over 750 attended *Transition XII*, which was dedicated to the memory of Opelika teacher and transition leader Wendy Baker (1966-2001).



During the conference’s 12 year history, it has hosted many national leaders in the transition field. Its roster of notable presenters includes Drs. Donn Brolin, Andrew Halpern, Bill Halloran, Frank Rusch, Paul Wehman, Michael Wehmeyer, Richard Horne, Edna Szymanski, Gary Meers, Ann Turnbull, Gary Clark, Lizanne DeStefano, John Trach, Paul Bates, Adelle Renzaglia, and Albert Miles. Ten of the keynote addresses have been delivered by consumers of services—persons who have disabilities. The Conference’s annual enrollment has steadily increased for a total registration count of almost 6,000 students, parents, teachers, rehabilitation counselors, job coaches, social caseworkers, employers, and administrators. These participants have engaged in a multitude of learning experiences through 391 concurrent sessions and 56 one-day workshops. Finally, the celebrity guest list includes Miss America 1996, Heather Whitestone; Mitchell Levitz, co-author of *Count Us In*; pianist, vocalist and lyricist Willie Moody; and the Ballerina Dancing Duo, Davina and Regina Hicks. It is for these and other reasons that the following words were offered by two national leaders:

**“The Alabama Transition Conference is the finest example of transition programming that exists anywhere in this country.”** (*Dr. Andrew Halpern, University of Oregon, 2000*)

**“I have always considered this conference as the best transition state conference in the nation, and I have shared that belief on many occasions as I have traveled the country.”** (*Dr. Bill East, Executive Director, National Association of State Directors of Special Education 2000*)

The sample below of past workshop and concurrent session titles hints at the breadth and depth of learning opportunities the conference has to offer.

Preventive Law and Transition  
Rehabilitation Counselors Identify Best Practices in Transition  
Students Learning to Be Leaders  
Building Transition Programs  
Life Centered Career Education (LCCE) Curriculum  
Alabama Occupational Diploma  
An Introduction to Transition  
Developing Job Coaching Strategies  
Parents in Transition  
A College Preparation Program for Students with Sensory Impairments  
Including Home Ownership in Transition Planning  
A Transition Program for Middle School Students  
Working Together for a Successful Occupational Diploma Program  
Collaborative IEP Meetings for Transition  
Enhancing Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Students  
Alabama Transition Initiative Information Center (ATTIC)  
Joint Opportunities for Bringing Success (JOBS) Partnership  
Transition Issues Unique to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students  
Person-Centered Transition Planning and the Self-Directed IEP  
Empowerment: The Key to a Successful Transition  
The Presidential task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities  
The Parent’s Role in Job Development and Placement  
Transition at the Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD)  
Starting a Self-Advocacy Club - It’s Easier Than You Think  
A Window to Alabama’s Statewide Study in Transition  
Community-Based Work Instructor- A Different Approach  
First Year AOD Teacher - Things You Should Know

Alabama Governor's Office on Disabilities: Policies and Issues  
SSI for Individuals 18 Years of Age and Younger: A Case Study  
Advice from College Students or "What I Wish I Had Known"  
Career Prep Work Instruction  
AOD: Career Technical Education Responsibilities  
Open Discussion with ATI Demonstration Sites  
Job Site Training: Setting the Stage for Success  
The Home Environment for Learning Transitional Skills  
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Work Incentives  
AOD Jointly Funded Job Coach: Version 2000  
Students in Transition to College and the Workplace  
AOD Portfolio Assessment: Why? When? How?  
Road-Mapping the AOD in Baldwin County  
Alabama Student Tracking System

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It has been the tradition to publish the proceedings from each conference. The titles of the published papers listed on page 5 reveal that many of these papers were authored by Alabama practitioners discussing transition services, programs, and practices within their local setting or within the state. The table of contents for each of these proceedings may be found at the following link: [www.auburn.edu/rse/outreach/conference.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/rse/outreach/conference.htm) By clicking on the cover images, you will be introduced to the list of published papers. These proceedings may be ordered from the Institute.

The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute welcomes written suggestions for upcoming conference topics and presenters. Pre-conference workshop presentation is by invitation; the subject areas and presenters are generally selected by the middle of the summer preceding each conference. A call for presenters for the 45-minute concurrent sessions goes out with the conference announcement early in each school year, generally by the first week in October. Written concurrent session proposals are reviewed promptly, and notifications of acceptance go out by early December. Scheduling of the concurrent sessions occurs approximately 30 days before the conference begins. Space reservations for the 2003 hall displays and Share Fair tables are limited to those who apply first; reservation forms for *Transition XIII* are included as inserts in the conference announcement.

For information on *Alabama Transition Conference XIII* and downloadable conference forms, see [www.auburn.edu/rse/institute/conference.html](http://www.auburn.edu/rse/institute/conference.html) after October 1, 2002. For conference information and published proceedings you may also contact:

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### Professional Papers on Transition in Alabama

- *Alabama's IEP + LCCE*
- *Alabama's Transition Initiative*
- *Mobile's Joint IEP/ITP Meetings*
- *Mobile's Work Instruction Program*
- *Marshall County's Transition School*
- *Cullman County's Transition Program*
- *Resources in Alabama for Job Placement*
- *Mobile's Transition Advisory Committee*
- *Auburn's Master's Program in Transition*
- *Calhoun Community College's Project Gate*
- *The University of Alabama's Project BOLD*
- *Alabama's Supported Employment Program*
- *Alabama's (proposed) Occupational Diploma*
- *Anniston's School to Work Transition Program*
- *UAB's Independent Living Skills for Transition*
- *Transition in Alabama: A Plan for Action!*
- *Auburn's Distance Learning Program*
- *A Vocational Education Program in Jefferson County*
- *Decatur's Community Transition Team in the Making*
- *Alabama Occupational Diploma's Employment English*
- *Alabama's Movement Toward a Functional Curriculum*
- *Auburn's Program for College Students with Disabilities*
- *Mobile's Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Transition*
- *A Work Instruction/Work Experience Program in Dothan*
- *A Supported Vocational Training Program in Birmingham*
- *Jefferson County's Pilot Program on Functional Assessment*
- *An Overview of Alabama's Response to the Transition Problem*
- *Tuscaloosa's Program where Consumers and Families Speak up*
- *State, Local, and Individual Planning for Programs and Services*
- *Birmingham's Student Transitional Education Program (S.T.E.P.)*
- *Scottsboro City Schools Transition from School-to-Work Program*
- *Self-Directed Abilities and Opportunities for Students in Transition*
- *Transition Services and Opportunities in Your Alabama Community*
- *The University of Alabama's "LD Bridges to Career Success Project"*
- *Alabama Occupational Diploma's Career Preparation (Social Studies)*
- *Alabama's Rehabilitation Transition Counselors: A Statewide Study*
- *Elmore County's Language Cookbook: A Functional Language Curriculum*
- *Alabama's Mental Health-Mental Retardation: A Transagency Transition Model*



These papers, authored by  
conference presenters,  
are published in the  
proceedings entitled

*“Transition in Alabama:  
A Profile of Commitment”*

# Transition VII Celebrates ATI

Transition VII conference will be held in Auburn, Ala. The many resources is ATI's Information Center, which is an advanced technological means for communication and information exchange. This is the largest crowd we've ever had at a conference," says Phil Browning, ATI Director.

Transition V welcomes a national celebrity. He is co-author of the award-winning best seller *Count Us In: Growing Up with Down Syndrome*. Also, he has been a special guest on such nationally tele-



**Youth with disabilities say 'Count Us In'**  
Mitchell was born on April 10, 1961, in Cortland Manor, New York, and grew up with two older sisters. Shortly after birth, he was diagnosed with Down syndrome. The placement of his disability was a challenge.

## Dr. Paul Wehman Heads List at VIII

ATI News Bureau  
Auburn, Ala.: Dr. Wehman joins list of national leaders who have participated in Alabama's Transition conference. Other prominent

## A Star Shines at Transition VI

Miss America and also former Miss Alabama attended the conference in 1996. She



## Dr. Frank Rusch at Transition IX



AP News Wire  
Dr. Rusch

## Celebrating 10 Years

ATI News Service, Karen Rabren  
The 10th annual Conference on Transition in Alabama will be held in Auburn March 8-10, 2000. "This year's program," says coordinator Dr. Phil Browning, "will acknowledge the state's remarkable progress made during the past ten years in serving its high school students with disabilities." Exemplary programs and services will be showcased throughout the 3-days.

Returning to join in the celebration will be many of the conference's former special guests. One such dignitary is Dr. Andrew Halpern who keynoted the first conference. "He is one of the nation's outstanding leaders in the field of transition," notes Mr. Whitstone, State Department of Education Special Education Director. Other returning celebrities include

The conference's growth is reflected in numbers. The 1st one held in 1991 attracted some 200 people whereas this year's is expected to draw over 800 participants. Also, this annual event has expanded to three days versus a one day program in the earlier years.