

# *Transitions* Longitudinal Study

5th Annual Report to the Ministry of  
Training, Colleges and Universities

June 2009

TRANSITIONS



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Transitions* longitudinal study exists only because of the work of the Learning Opportunities Task Force. Between 1998 and 2002, LOTF revolutionized services and programs for students with learning disabilities at ten post-secondary pilot institutions. The core of the pilot programs has since been replicated at all colleges and universities in Ontario in the form of the Enhanced Services Program. As such, the legacy of LOTF exists in the fact that Ontario provides the most comprehensive support for post-secondary students with learning disabilities in the world. *Transitions* will help to test the efficacy of this statement as the study unfolds over the next decade.

The province of Ontario owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Bette Stephenson, who was a passionate and active Chairman to the task force. Great expertise and commitment was exemplified by Eva Nichols, who acted as Senior Consultant to the Chair.

This acknowledgement would not be complete without paying tribute to two other individuals who served LOTF. Bonnie Tiffin was a capable Executive Coordinator for the Richmond Hill office, and Dr. Laura Weintraub was an impassioned consultant to LOTF until her untimely death in January, 2004.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the first *Transitions* Annual Report we have been pleasantly surprised to witness the success and resiliency of our participants completing their post secondary diplomas and degrees began as pilot students, and in many instances, continuing to complete a second or even third program. Though our Annual Reports focus on quantitative data, our understanding of persons with learning disabilities has also been greatly enriched by the many qualitative comments that have been submitted. While many of our *Transitions* participants have been motivated by their love of education, some have also commented on their perception of needing to be better qualified than the average person in order to compete equally.

As we submit this 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, we can see that the focus of the longitudinal study has been shifting from the achievement of post-secondary education, to employment and career goals. In previous reports we have offered this encouraging observation: *Transitions participants are generally graduating, working living and thriving as successfully as the general population.* We have stubbornly made the claim that this statement is not only important, it may even be regarded as startling given the difficult history of persons with learning disabilities. For this reason, we have always defined success for our *Transitions* participants as achieving goals that are statistically close to the general population.

For the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, there are some encouraging developments related to employment and the goal of achieving parity with the general population. For example, on the difficult issue of unemployment, our *Transitions* cohort's rate is within 1% of the Canadian rate of 7%. With regard to participants' lower salaries--noted as a *Transitions* Trend in the 4<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*—in this year's report, we are happy to note that the Trend is ending as there is no significant difference between our cohort and the general population. As well, the previous report's Trend citing that female *Transitions* graduates experience higher rates of under-employment, is likewise an Ending Trend this year.

Clearly, our *Transitions* cohort has been making the transition from post-secondary education into employment and career avenues successfully. Still, as we look more closely at the many comments in our qualitative reservoir, we are able to see evidence of the continuing effect of learning disabilities. Though our participants often work very hard and may be at least as qualified people as others, there exists some frustration with jobs they didn't get and unfulfilled career aspirations. As well, some participants continue to experience effects of their learning disability in other, non-work related aspects of their lives.

Our participants know well that a learning disability is a life long condition. Once post-secondary education is successfully completed, a learning disability does not miraculously disappear. Success is achieved to the extent that it is managed. It is for this reason that as we transition into the second half of our ten year longitudinal study, we will remain mindful more than ever of our original primary research question:

*Did the post-secondary pilot supports accommodate a student's learning disability in a manner*

*specific to the educational environment, or did the supports teach transferable skills and personal resiliency in a way that allows for former pilot students to take control of and change their own lives?*

Only in a longitudinal study can this essential question of personal resiliency be answered by looking at various aspects of a life fully lived over a span of time. Employment and career goals will remain central issues for the remainder of the study. It will also be fascinating to observe social and relationship issues from the perspective of a maturing *Transitions* group. With these thoughts in mind, the following is a synopsis of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Report's *Transitions* Trends:

## **The 2008 profile of *Transitions* Trends:**

### ***Transitions* Trend #1: Participants place a high value on post-secondary education. (Continuing Trend)**

In 2008, 30 participants (32%) are currently studying, with 23 returning for further studies after graduation, and a full 52% of graduates intending to continue in post-secondary education in the future.

### ***Transitions* Trend #2: *Transitions* participants have a higher than average retention rate than the general population. (Continuing Trend)**

In 2008, there were 30 participants (32%) still studying, and of these only seven have not yet graduated from a post-secondary program, and only four are still in the program they began as a pilot student. In 2008, only four participants left school without graduating. Thus, the *Transitions* retention rate of 4% is markedly lower than the general population rate of 15%.

### ***Transitions* Trend #3: *Transitions* PSE Leavers cite inability to pass required courses as the most common reason for not graduating. (Continuing Trend)**

Of the four PSE Leavers, three indicated that they could not pass required courses. Though these numbers are very small—indeed less than the general population—being able to pass required courses was a LOTF benchmark for success, and consequently we will maintain *Transitions* Trend #3 for 2008.

### ***Transitions* Trend #4: *Transitions* participants combine post-secondary education and work reasonably well. (Continuing Trend)**

In 2008, all 30 *Transitions* participants still in school are combining their education with paid or unpaid work. This 100% figure is far greater than last year's figure of 65%.

***Transitions* Trend #5: A high percentage of *Transitions* participants are living with their parents or other family members. (Continuing Trend)**

The percentage of *Transitions* participants living at home is 30% compared to 20% in the general population and 54.4% of adults with LD in the LDAC study of similar age.

***Transitions* Trend #6: Financial concerns are impacting on *Transitions* participants' life decisions. (Continuing Trend)**

Since the first annual report in 2004, we have noticed a trend towards participants having increased debt load. Student loans in particular are causing stress, with 38% reporting that student loan debt prevents them from enjoying the lifestyle they want.

***Transitions* Trend #7: The majority of *Transitions* participants, upon graduation, feel prepared to seek employment. (Continuing Trend)**

We have asked participants if they felt prepared to seek employment after graduation since this may be one of the best indicators of pilot supports developing into personal resiliency. Sixty-nine percent who have graduated felt prepared, which is a slight decrease from 2007 at 74%, and 2006 at 75%, respectively.

***Transitions* Trend #8: *Transitions* participants have lower salaries and are underemployed compared to the general population. (Ending Trend)**

Income earning is one of the key benchmarks for success for our *Transitions* cohort, and achieving parity with the general population is a significant development this year. In the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, due to a marked decrease among participants earning less than \$20,000, and an increase in the higher income brackets, *Transitions* participants have overcome a significant historical barrier.

***Transitions* Trend #9: Compared to other LD Ontario residents, aged 22-29, *Transitions* participants have a high rate of employment and good salaries. (Continuing Trend)**

The LDAC report notes that among Ontario residents with learning disabilities aged 22-29, 42.2% are unemployed, and 26.3% only earn between \$1-9999 annually. For the *Transitions* cohort, 93% (10% more than last year) are earning salaries of \$20,000 or more.

***Transitions* Trend #10: PSE Leavers are generally earning salaries that are comparable to graduates in the general population. (Continuing Trend)**

With only two participants being Leavers for the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, it is difficult to confirm or cancel *Transitions* Trend # 10. However, given that both Leavers are working, and do not feel under-employed, we will confirm this Trend at least for this year.

***Transitions* Trend #11: Field of study likely influences low salaries of *Transitions* participants. (Continuing Trend)**

Our *Transitions* cohort has often chosen post-secondary programs in the Arts and Social Sciences, whose average annual earnings are lower than the earnings in professional programs. For example, the average salary six months after graduation for a student with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ontario was \$32,249, and for a college arts graduate \$27,237. For the average architecture or engineering graduate salaries were significantly higher at \$51,540 for university graduates, and \$38,000 for college graduates.

***Transitions* Trend #12: Female *Transitions* graduates are more likely to experience high rates of under-employment than male participants. (Ending Trend)**

We investigated this Trend once again to determine if indeed it has been established as an Ending Trend. In 2005, 19% of female and 7% of male graduates were under-employed, and in 2006 the figure was 8% and 4% respectively. Since that time, there has been very little difference. Consequently, we are happy to report that for both college and university graduates, *Transitions* Trend # 12 is ending.

***Transitions* Trend #13: *Transitions* participants have a slightly higher rate of unemployment compared to the general population. (Ending Trend)**

We investigated this trend once again, given the importance of employment goals to our *Transitions* cohort. Last year our *Transitions* group unemployment rate was remarkably low at 5%, 2% lower than the general population. This year, the *Transitions* rate is 8% compared to the general population rate of 7%, which confirms that our cohort has essentially achieved parity.

***Transitions* Trend #14: *Transitions* participants place great emphasis on educational and career goals, while social goals remain relatively low. (Continuing Trend)**

In our life goals section, we asked participants, *what kind of goals other than career goals do you wish to achieve in the near future?* Consistent with previous year reports, 55% responded *buy property*, 54% *travel*, 52% *be debt free*; while social goals such as *get married* 44%, *start a family* 42% and have a *steady relationship* 37%, continue to be relatively low goals. Pursuing further education remains steady, years after graduation for some, at 33%.

***Transitions* Trend #15: A high number of *Transitions* participants engage in volunteer work. (Continuing Trend)**

In 2006, 38% of participants did volunteer work, in 2007 34%, and in 2008 33% participated, which given career demands, is quite remarkable.

***Transitions* Trend #16: A high number of *Transitions* participants engage in physical activity. (Continuing Trend)**

Our *Transitions* cohort has consistently engaged in physical activity more frequently than the general population. While in the general population the rate of participation is approximately 30%, in 2008 59% of our group indicated that they do regular exercise.

***Transitions* Trend #17: *Transitions* participants appear to be resilient in social relationships. (Continuing Trend)**

In 2007, 63% of participants indicated being satisfied or very satisfied with their friendships, and 53% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their relationship. For the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, again 63% are satisfied or very satisfied with their friendships, and a surprisingly high 75% expressed being satisfied or very satisfied with their relationship.

***Transitions* Trend #18: *Transitions* participants disclose their learning disabilities at work only when necessary for the job. (Continuing Trend)**

We have consistently noted throughout five annual reports that most *Transitions* do not disclose their learning disability unless it is necessary to do so. Some of our participants have indicated their intention to disclose in the future and should perhaps be encouraged that only two participants have reported a negative response from an employer.

***Transitions* Trend #19: Significantly more women working full-time disclose their learning disability at work than men. (Continuing Trend)**

Similar to the figures from last year, in the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report* only seven males and 19 females working full-time have made disclosure of their learning disability to their employer.

***Transitions* Trend #20: Few participants who are currently employed use accommodations and /or assistive technology at work. (Continuing Trend)**

Consistent with previous years, only 25% of participants currently employed use assistive technology at work.

***Transitions* Trend #21: *Transitions* participants have good relationships with their co-workers. (Continuing Trend)**

Similar to previous years, in the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Survey*, an impressive 88% of participants described their relationship with their colleagues as comfortable.

***Transitions* Trend #22: An overwhelming percentage of *Transitions* participants experience job satisfaction. (Continuing Trend)**

In 2007, 73% of participants expressed satisfaction with their jobs, and for the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report* the percentage is similarly high at 69%.



***Transitions* Trend #23: Overall, *Transitions* participants feel they have learned how to manage their learning disability. (Continuing Trend)**

Last year an impressive 87% of participants indicated that they have learned to manage their learning disability. For the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, that figure is even more impressive indicator of resiliency at 92%.

***Transitions* Trend #24: A higher percentage of *Transitions* participants than the general population report being employed in a field related to their education. (New Trend)**

In the general population only 54% of college graduates employed full-time are working in a field related to their education. In the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, 75% of employed participants reported working in a job related to their education.

**Note on a future *Transitions* Trend:** Emphasized throughout the literature in general, and specifically in previous *Transitions* reports, the most difficult aspect of conducting longitudinal research is dealing with and controlling for participant survey attrition. Though there is no research vehicle that is as effective as longitudinal research in the provision of rich quantitative and qualitative information, participant attrition -sometimes even drastic attrition- is considered a normal occupational hazard. Given that our *Transitions* participants are in the age range of greatest geographical and career mobility, we have been seriously challenged as researchers to locate people as they move and transition into various aspects of their lives.

Still, from talking to people over the years as well as reading the many qualitative responses submitted each year, we know that we have a very committed core of *Transitions* participants. So this year at the beginning of the survey cycle in January we decided to take extraordinary measures to locate people whose contact information was no longer accurate. After countless hours, we discovered, without exception, that once we were able to locate people they were positively inclined to complete the survey and continue with the *Transitions* longitudinal study. Given the busy and changing lives that is a fact of life for *Transitions* participants, it is understandable that some people forget to log into our portal and to record a change of e-mail, phone number or mailing address. As researchers, we were often gratified to hear from rediscovered participants that they were glad that we made the effort to find them.

So, as of the submission date of the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report* in June 2009, our *Transitions* cohort is 93. But we are happy to report that we have concluded the new surveying process in anticipation of the 6<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report* for 2010, and our *Transitions* numbers have actually risen to 125 participants! This number is above the 2008 survey of 119, and is, quite frankly unheard of in longitudinal research. We wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to our participants, whose continued commitment points to a very positive second half of the *Transitions* longitudinal study.

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# I. METHODOLOGY

The fifth *Transitions* survey was launched on January 1, 2008, and the surveying ended on May 30th, 2008. The survey was once again made available to participants to complete either online via the *Transitions* Portal or by telephone with a Research Assistant. Mailed surveys were continued as a third option for those participants were very difficult to get a hold of, or otherwise did not have access to the Internet but who also did not prefer to do the survey over the telephone.

Our final figure of completed surveys for this round is 93, down from our total of 119 the previous year.

**Please Note:** *As of the submission date of the 5th Annual Report, June 2009, the survey cycle has been completed for the 6th survey, in anticipation of the 6th annual report, due in June 2010. During the 6th phase of surveying we made an extraordinary effort to contact and engage participants, and are very pleased to communicate that we have reversed the normal rate of attrition, endemic to longitudinal research. We are proud to confirm that 125 participants--higher than the total of 119 two years earlier--have completed the survey and continued their commitment to Transitions!*

The following will outline in detail the surveying process as well as the obstacles that were encountered for the fourth phase of the *Transitions* Study.

## I. 1. Getting Started

In preparation for the fifth round of *Transitions* surveying, the Research Assistants sent out a general email to all *Transitions* participants notifying them that the fifth survey was about to be released. Surveying commenced on January 1, 2008, when participants were emailed invitations, which included their unique token IDs, as well as a link directing them toward the *Transitions* Portal where they can complete the survey online. The email invitations were well received by the participants resulting in a healthy level of surveys being completed online within the first couple of weeks. This can be partly attributed to the use of these email invitations for the intake and second surveys, as participants have become familiar with them. Some participants eagerly responded by completing the survey online, while some sent one of the Research Assistants an email requesting a telephone survey.

In spite of this positive start, we did encounter some difficulties, all of which are in keeping with the nature of longitudinal research.

## I 2. Telephone Surveying

Once the fifth survey was launched and all participants were contacted either through email or telephone, our next step was to get the participants to complete the survey. As stated above, there was an early surge due to the email invitations, which resulted in many online surveys being completed via the *Transitions* Portal. As the weeks went by, however, it became clear that the level of involvement and the number of surveys being completed online was declining.

In an attempt to revive the momentum, the Research Assistants began a “reminder campaign” and started emailing and calling participants on a regular basis to encourage them to complete the fourth *Transitions* survey. This generated the revitalization that we were hoping for as another batch of participants completed the survey online, while others requested to have a telephone survey with a Research Assistant. Some were willing to complete the survey when the first contacted by a Research Assistant. Some participants, as a result of their learning disabilities, found the online survey to be overwhelming and too difficult to navigate. These concerns were easily addressed by scheduling a telephone interview, during which the participant completes the survey verbally while a Research Assistant transcribes their responses.

### I. 3. Telephone Surveying: The Interview

Telephone surveys were set up according to the availability of the participants and all efforts were made to accommodate their schedules by the Research Assistants, in an attempt to engage as many participants as possible and to retain their interest in the study. As a result, telephone surveys were conducted during the weekdays and on weekends in the morning, afternoon or evening depending on the participant’s schedule.

However, a couple of obstacles arose when a Research Assistant telephoned the participant on the agreed upon date and time to complete the survey. First, the participant was not at home, and second, the participant had to reschedule because something else had come up. This of course delayed the surveying process, because in some cases it would take numerous more attempts for the participants to complete the survey either because they became unreachable or they were too busy with school or work.

When a Research Assistant was finally able to get a telephone survey underway, she would notify the participant that the length of time it would take to complete the survey is about 30 minutes. The Research Assistant would then ask the questions and transcribe the responses given by the participant. The advantage to conducting a telephone survey included the ability to elaborate on or to clarify questions, which resulted in more detailed responses. By speaking to the participant, the Research Assistants also had the opportunity to get to know them on a more

personal level, which helped to create a relationship between the participants and the Research Assistants and which will hopefully enhance the *Transitions* community as the study progresses. It was also imperative for the Research Assistant to obtain the most up-to-date contact information to help combat participant attrition.

Once a survey had been completed, the Research Assistant would then log on to the *Transitions* Portal to access the online survey. In order to input the responses, the Research Assistant had to enter in the participant's unique token ID, which is what the study uses to differentiate between all the participants.

## **I. 4. Online Surveys**

The *Transitions* Portal Administrator was able to make the online survey more user-friendly and managed to fix many of the problems which occurred in the last survey. As with the second and third surveys, participants have the option to save their responses and return to the survey at a later date and time.

Since the beginning of the study, the Research Assistants expected that the convenience factor of the online survey would elicit a positive response from participants, particularly as they could do the survey at their own leisure and in the privacy of their own homes. Since many of the *Transitions* participants are familiar with computers and the Internet, they expressed preference for the *Transitions* Portal, though procrastination proved to be a major obstacle. On average, it took about four to six email and telephone reminders combined before the majority of participants completed the survey online.

## **I. 5. Mailed Surveys**

Given the difficulty in reaching some of the *Transitions* participants, the Research Assistants decided to continue offering the option of a mailed survey with a pre-paid envelope that had begun in the second phase. They mailed surveys to participants without email addresses or Internet access. It was hoped that the mailed surveys including a personalized letter would succeed in encouraging participants.

When the Research Assistants followed up with participants, some of them did mention that they would prefer having the survey mailed out rather than completing it online or by the telephone. There were a couple of setbacks with this approach. For example, some participants thought that the survey was junk mail and threw it out before opening it. Other participants forgot about the survey after initially opening it and did not complete it at a later date.

## **I. 6. *Transitions* Portal**

The *Transitions* Portal, located at [www.transitionsportal.ca](http://www.transitionsportal.ca), came into existence in the spring of 2005 and accompanying its launch was the *First Annual Transitions Longitudinal Research Study to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities*. A PDF version of it as well as the *Second and Third Annual Report* can presently be downloaded from the *Transitions* Portal.

One of the main purposes of the Portal is to create a sense of community among the *Transitions* participants and staff. The Portal is meant to be a sort of virtual meeting place where participants can get together and meet each other to share their experiences about what it is like for them to be in school, or getting through it, as well as discussing how their learning disabilities affect their work. The Portal provides a forum for participants to gather, and in this way act as a substitute for face-to-face meetings, which are not possible at this time given the diversity in geographic locations of participants ranging from British Columbia to Nova Scotia

## **I. 7. *Transitions* Administrative Portal**

In addition to the public *Transitions* Portal, there is also an Administrative Portal which only *Transitions* researchers have access to. The Administrative Portal is where all completed surveys are maintained, providing the Research Assistants with the convenience of viewing the responses online by simply logging in and selecting which survey they wish to analyze. The Administrative Portal has a variety of functions, including the ability to send out emails to the participants, keep track of who has completed the survey and who has not, export data into an Access database for analysis, and also to provide a manageable way of looking up token IDs.

The Administrative Portal is also a useful tool for writing the participants' Thank You cards for completing the survey. The Research Assistants are able to specifically look up the individual responses of each participant and to write a personalized note in his or her card, which many participants were appreciative of receiving, along with a *Transitions* USB stick.

The Administrative Portal also allows Research Assistants to update any new contact information for participants by editing his or her particular profile, though such information is also entered into the *Transitions* Study Database.

## **I. 8. *Transitions* Database**

The *Transitions* Study Database is essentially a very detailed Excel spreadsheet, on which the Research Assistants record everything from telephone numbers to addresses to small notes about what participants are planning on doing in their immediate future, so as to get an idea of some of the changes that could happen when the next round of surveying begins.

This database is the primary resource that the Research Assistants work with in terms of contacting participants, updating their contact information including email addresses and telephone numbers, as well as keeping track of how the surveying process is going.

It is then the responsibility of the Research Assistant to contact and engage her own group of participants and to encourage them to complete the survey. By dividing up the participants it also helps to promote a sense of familiarity, with the same Research Assistant intending to follow through year after year. Participants were able to recognize the name of their Research Assistant resulting in fewer deleted email messages and ignored telephone calls.

## **I. 9. *Transitions* Methodology Challenges**

Longitudinal studies are fraught with methodological challenges. Maintaining secure funding for the duration of a study is a familiar challenge to conducting longitudinal research. Keeping track of a highly mobile cohort of participants engaged in the busiest and most complicated phase of their lives is not easy. Asking people to pause in their busy lives and complete a long survey each year is also not easy. It is well known that participant attrition is one of the most difficult aspects of longitudinal research, and we are grateful to our participants for staying with the study.

Once again, the major challenge in the fifth phase of surveying was the difficulty contacting participants due to invalid telephone numbers, addresses and email accounts. Incorrect email information was an issue for several reasons – many of the participants ceased to use their school email account after graduating and did not provide us with a new address, some simply stopped using one account in favour of another and, in some cases, participants did not have access to a computer due to different living arrangements or no longer being a student. Without fail, Research Assistants make an effort to obtain correct email addresses for all participants who are surveyed, even requesting a ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ address when possible.

With respect to inaccurate telephone and address information, drawing from a transitory population makes it challenging to maintain a database that is up-to-date. Despite the fact that Research Assistants have made significant efforts to collect current contact information in each



phase of surveying and have urged participants to forward new telephone numbers or addresses at any time of the year, it has proved difficult. Besides invalid contact information, another obstacle was the frequency of telephone calls going to voice mail. Research Assistants observed a surge in unanswered calls in the fourth round and attributed this to people either not recognizing the displayed telephone number or not wanting to answer a long distance ring. It was very unusual for a participant to respond to a voice mail message, so it was ineffectual to leave a message in these instances. To compound these difficulties, family members were often unwilling to divulge new telephone numbers if they did not recognize the caller or the name of the study. Without an accurate telephone number or address, the usual means of searching for a person via the Internet yielded no results. Still, the overall surveying process was successful, and our core *Transitions* participants are committed to participating in the study for its duration.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### III.1. Overview of primary articles used in this study related to the General Population

#### **Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) Report, April, 2008.**

This report claims that 23.7 of Canadians under the age of 25 report feeling overqualified in their jobs. This statistic is significant because it represents the highest percentage among 16 nations, including the United States, where 19% of people under 25 feel overqualified. This follows on a trend towards an increase in low wage workers, despite economic growth. For example in 2000, that figure, adjusted for inflation at \$11.25, was 19.1%.

This report recommends an increase in the availability of co-op programs and encouraging students to consider trade schools.

#### **Rene Morissette and Anick Johnson. "Are Good Jobs Disappearing in Canada?" Business and Labour Market Analysis Division: Statistics Canada, 2005. 11F0019MIE – No. 239.**

Using data about hourly wages from the Labour Force Survey from the 1997-2004 period, this study sets out to assess whether the importance of low-wage jobs and well-paid jobs has changed over this period of time. They find little evidence that the importance of well-paid jobs has declined, and little evidence that jobs paying \$10.00 per hour or less have increased in importance in the Canadian economy.

Significantly, however, this study highlights the increasing gap between young workers (under 35) and those who have been in the workforce for years. Importantly, it also shows that within age groups, the wages of newly hired male and female employees (those with two years of seniority or less) have fallen substantially. In addition, in the private sector, a trend of hiring new employees on a temporary basis has risen substantially, from 11% in 1989 to 21% in 2004. The authors suggest that companies benefit by offering temporary jobs to their new employees because it reduces their need to provide defined-benefit pension plans.

#### **Rene Morissette and Garnett Picot. "Summary of: Low-paid Work and Economically Vulnerable Families over the Last Two Decades" Business and Labour Market Analysis Division: Statistics Canada, 2005. 11F0019 – No. 249.**

This study analyses fluctuations in hourly wages over the period of 1981-2004. In this period of time, hourly wages have remained remarkably stable, and among employees ages 17-64, median hourly wages remained at approximately \$15. However, wages in full-time versus part-time jobs evolved in a very different way. Median hourly wages in full-time jobs rose about 5% while those in part-time jobs fell by 15%. In addition, median wages among newly hired employees has fallen. Median hourly wages for male workers with two years of seniority or less fell 13% between 1981-2004, while among women they fell 2%.

Overall, the proportion of low-paid jobs has been stable in this time period. In 1981, 17% of the jobs held by workers aged 25-64 paid below \$10 per hour, and this changed to 16% in 2004. This study theorizes that since the workforce has become better educated and more experienced over the last two decades, one would expect the incidents of low-paid work to fall. However, this was not the case, and within demographic groups like those aged 25-34, the proportion of low wage work increased.

**Lev Grossman. "Grow Up? Not so Fast." *Time Magazine*, January 24, 2005.**

There is a strong trend among young people today to live at home with their parents well into adulthood, to extend finishing their education, to delay establishing their career, and to avoid or delay committing to permanent relationships. This cover Time magazine article characterizes this twentysomething phenomenon as an extended childhood, a sort of Peter Pan syndrome.

"The years from 18 until 25 and even beyond have become a distinct and separate life stage, a strange, transitional never-never land between adolescence and adulthood in which people stall for a few years, putting off the iron cage of adult responsibility that constantly threatens to crash down on them. They're betwixt and between. You could call them twixters."

Of particular interest to our *Transitions* panel whose average is 26, is that "the percentage of 26-year-olds living with their parents has nearly doubled since 1970, from 11% to 20%...." In 2004, 49% of *Transitions* participants were living with their parents, and in 2005 the number had dropped to 39%. As one can see, 39% is much higher than the North American average of 20%. There are extenuating reasons why the *Transitions* group have chosen to live at home longer than the general population, often related to support and the financial assistance they receive from their parents. Living arrangements are one of several interesting social issues that *Transitions* will observe in the coming years.

**The Daily, "Study: Post-secondary Education-Who leaves and Why," an excerpt from the Statistics Canada, 2002 Youth in Transition Survey (YITS), November 18, 2004.**

Approximately one in every seven students (age 20-22) who attend post-secondary education

quit, with the most common reason given for leaving being a lack of program fit. Interestingly, almost 40% of students who left post-secondary programs between the ages of 18-20 had returned two years later.

Students who stayed in college or university were more likely to report being confident about their skills, were able to make friends easily, and never thought about dropping out.

Not surprisingly, post-secondary Leavers expressed relatively low satisfaction with their program choice. Leavers also cited financial barriers as a major obstacle to continuing with their post-secondary education.

**Charles M. Beach and Ross Finnie. “A Longitudinal Analysis of Earnings Change in Canada.” Business and Labour Market Analysis Division: Statistics Canada, 2004. 11F0019 – No. 227.**

This study analyses tax-based longitudinal data collected from 1982-1989. It found that over this period of time there has been a rise in earnings of women, increased polarization of earnings among men, and a significant decline in the real earning of entry level workers (age 20 -24) for both men and women. In addition, upward mobility with regard to wages is shown to be significantly higher for male than for female workers, though with some decline in the 1998-1999 periods.

**Ross Finnie and Ted Wannell. “The Evolution of the Gender Earnings Gap Amongst Canadian University Graduates.” Business and Labour Market Analysis Division: Statistics Canada, 2004. 11F0019MIE – No. 235.**

This papers analyses the gender earnings gap amongst Canadian Bachelor’s level university graduates. The overall gap, after two years in the workforce, was quite narrow, though it increased five years after graduation, with men earning more over time than women and increased further over time. Women are shown to be overrepresented in disciplines that generally have low earnings: “a large portion of the gender earnings gap amongst recent graduates has been associated with a general tendency for female graduates of a given field of study to have lower earnings than males regardless of the specific nature of their current job characteristics, post-graduation work experience, or personal attributes.” (13) A contributing factor may be that men employed full-time work more hours than women, with the gap growing over time. Many more male than female graduates worked very long hours (more than 50 hours per week), with more than one-quarter of full-time employed men working greater than 50 hours per week in every age group, compared to just 17.1% of female graduates. The gap, however, is greatest amongst married graduates with children: married mothers in full-time work averaged at least four hours less work a week than their male counterparts.

**Rene Morissette et al. "Relative Wage Patterns among the Highly Educated in a Knowledge-based Economy." *Business and Labour Market Analysis Division: Statistics Canada*, 2004.**

The major finding of this paper is that even though employment grew much faster in the high-knowledge industries in the last two decades compared with other industries, trends in relative wages and real wages of university and high school graduates have displayed similar patterns across industries. However, earnings of university graduates with degrees in engineering, mathematics and computer sciences are higher than those of other university graduates (21). This study also notes that in all private sector industries, young and prime-aged female university graduates have experienced faster wage growth than their male counterparts (23).

**Allen, Mary and Chantal Vaillancourt. "Class of 2000: Profile of post-secondary graduates and student debt." *Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division: Statistics Canada*. 2004. Catalogue no. 81-595-MIE – No. 016.2004.**

This research paper includes results from the 2002 National Graduates Survey, which, at the time of this report, is the most current Canadian National study about the transition from post-secondary education to the labour market. The NGS is a longitudinal study that measures the labour market success of graduates from Canadian universities and colleges two and five years after graduation. The class of 2000, surveyed initially at the time of graduation, returned results in 2002 about education, employment, and debt.

Allen and Vaillancourt highlight the complexity of the transition to the labour market after graduation. Despite the myriad of paths chosen by this graduating class, two years after graduation 90% of the class of 2000 who did not return to post-secondary education were employed.

Both university and college graduates were equally likely to be employed; however those with bachelor degrees typically held jobs with higher earnings. Eighty-one percent of both college and university graduates were employed full-time, with 9% of college graduates working part-time and 8% of university graduates working part-time. The unemployment rate was the same for both university and college graduates in 2002 with a rate of 7%.

The estimated gross annual earnings of 2000 graduates who were working full-time in 2002 were markedly different depending on the level of educational attainment. The median annual earnings for a college graduate was \$31,200.00 while bachelor graduates typically earned \$39,000.00 annually. Gender does play a significant role when it comes to the difference in salaries between college and university graduates. The median annual earning of a male college graduate was \$35,000.00 while the median annual earnings of a female college graduate was \$28,600.00 annually, with a difference of \$6,400.00. The same is true for university graduates. The median annual earning of a male university graduate was

\$42,000 while the median annual earning of a female university graduate was \$37,000.00 with a difference of \$5,000.00. This wage difference is interesting, as Allen and Vaillancourt point out that female graduates were slightly more likely to be employed than their male counterparts two years after graduation, however they were less likely to be working full-time.

**Mylene Lambert, Klarka Zeman, Mary Allen, Patrick Bussiere. “Who Pursues post-secondary education, who leaves and why: Results from the Youth in Transition Survey.” *Statistics Canada*. 2004. Catalogue no. 81-595-MIE2004026.**

This study uses data from the Youth in Transition Survey, a national longitudinal survey which first interviewed Canadian youth aged 18-20 in 1999 with a follow-up in both 2000 and 2002. Emphasis is placed on university education.

Over two-thirds of youth in Canada have gone to either college or university in their early twenties. In general, students who pursue post-secondary education are more likely to be women, single with no children, and they are more likely to have lived with two parents while in high school. Youth who have a strong sense of belonging in high school and who do well in high school are more likely to continue their education.

Fifteen percent of youth aged 20-22 who attended post-secondary left their studies without completing their program. Lack of program ‘fit’ is the most common reason for leaving post-secondary, though one in ten youth cited lack of money as the main reason, while only 7% left because they wanted to work. Those who left post-secondary to travel, to change programs, or who just ‘wanted a break’ were the most likely to return, with return rates of 68%, 47% and 38% respectively. Overall, almost 40% of youth that left post-secondary education at the age of 18-20 had returned two years later.

Though this study reports the 2002 YITS findings, the writers of the report emphasize the ongoing nature of their work, stating: “future cycles of YITS will provide a clearer picture on the completion of post-secondary education....[and] will also allow for an in-depth examination of the labour market outcomes associated with having some post-secondary education....” (20)

**Teresa Janz. “Low-paid employment and moving up: A closer look at full-time, full-year workers.” *Statistics Canada*. 2004. Catalogue no. 75F0002MIE – 2004009.**

The average Canadian who worked full time in 1996-2001 had a 14% probability of being employed with low hourly wages. Low hourly wages is considered less than \$10.95 per hour (after tax). Those with a university degree had an 8% probability of experiencing low

pay compared to 21% of those with high school or less. Women in the service industry were most likely to experience low wages.

Sex differences remain with regard to annual earnings even when other variables were consistent like age, education, occupation and industry. Women earn significantly less money annually than men, on average \$4000.00 - \$8000.00 less. Women are more likely to be low paid and less likely to experience upward mobility in the workplace (men experience a 19% probability of low pay while women experience a 34% probability).

**Sandra Franke. "School, work and the school-work combination by young people." Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division. *Statistics Canada*. 2004. Catalogue no. 89-584-MIE – No.3.**

This research paper utilizes the General Social Survey and the National Graduate Survey to analyze the time use of high school and post-secondary students when they combine work and study and furthermore how that time use changes upon entry into the labour force.

The transition from school to work has gone from being a simple event to a process, currently estimated to take eight years to complete. The length of this process has an impact on other transitions, like leaving the family home, entering a conjugal union and having children.

One in three young people combine work and study instead of working full-time. Interestingly, the combination of light work and school does not cause men or women to change the amount of time spent on education. Light work has the same effect on men and women, both cut out leisure time, especially socialising and watching television. However, when combining demanding work and school, socialising and leisure and sports become non-existent in the lives of working students. The amount of time spent sleeping also decreases.

Men tend to remain dependent on their parents longer than women, regardless of their employment status. Forty-seven percent of women at the post-secondary level no longer live with their parents compared with 34% of young men.

When the transition from school to work is completed, the time use pattern of young people relieves considerably. A job fills a large portion of the day but much time is left for leisure activities and personal care. Young men make the transition to work earlier than their female counterparts. Employed young men also devote more time to work than young women.

***Highlights from the 2003-2004 Ontario University Graduate Survey. Council of Ontario Universities.***

This executive summary done by the Council of Ontario Universities draws its information from the Labour Force survey of 2002 by Statistics Canada. This survey is designed to describe employment experiences, earnings and skills matches of students who graduated in 2001 from undergraduate university programs.

Two years after their 2001 graduation, 95.8% of graduates from undergraduate degree programs in the province of Ontario were employed compared with a rate of 93.6% six months after graduation. Their average annual earnings two years after graduation was \$43,296.00 annually compared with \$37,789.00 achieved six months after graduation. Two years after graduation, 85.3% of graduates were working either 'closely' or 'somewhat' related to their field of study, compared with 80.2% six months after graduation.

***Provincial Overview of Survey Results Ontario. Employment Profile: 2001-2002 College Graduates. Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. 2003.***

Of college graduates in Ontario, 57.8% were employed full-time in 2002 with 10.4% employed part-time and 10.2% unemployed. Of those employed part-time 43% say they could not find a full-time job, while 10.7% say working part-time is a personal choice. Forty-four percent of women report working part-time while only 39.7% of men work part-time.

Forty-seven percent of college graduates one year after graduation are employed full-time in a job related to their field of study, with the rate increasing to 51.8% two years after graduation and 61.5% three years after graduation.

The average starting salary one year after graduation is \$26,680.00, increasing to \$28,779.00 and \$34,171.00 two and then three years after graduation.

***2001 Census: analysis series. "Education in Canada: Raising the Standard." Statistics Canada. 2001. Catalogue no. 96F0030XIE2001012.***

According to the 2001 Census, Canada entered the twenty-first century with a population better educated than ever, with 61% of Canadians ages 25-34 having completed post-secondary education. Twenty-eight percent of all individuals in that age group had university qualifications and 21% held college diplomas while 12% had trade credentials. By comparison, in 1991, only 49% of Canadians had completed education beyond high school.



As far as field of study is concerned, the highest number of Canadian graduates had degrees in Education with a rate of 14%. However, an increasing number of students are choosing technology and business fields in 2001 with Engineering and Commerce attracting the most students with 9% and 8% of the population, respectively.

Women accounted for 57% of the growth in university qualifications in the 1990 and similarly in college, women accounted for 59% of graduates. Two-thirds of trade certificates are held by men.

**Klarka Zema, Tamara Knighton, and Patrick Bussiere. "Education and labour market pathways of young Canadians between age 20 and 22: an Overview." *Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada*. 2001. Catalogue no. 81-595-MIE – No. 018.**

This research paper utilises the Youth in Transition Survey, a Canadian National longitudinal study designed to examine the patterns of major transition in young people's lives, with a focus on education, training and work. It reports the results of youth aged 20-22 in 2001 with regard to education and work.

By age 22, 76% of youth had participated in post-secondary, though only 35% had graduated; this is because many youth at age 22 are still attending post-secondary education, and is not meant to indicate that they have left post-secondary. Eleven percent of youth in this age group left post-secondary without graduating, though more than 35% of those PSE Leavers at age 20 had returned to school at age 22.

The proportion of youth not in school and not working rose from 10% at age 20 to 14% at age 22. However the authors caution that this "should not necessarily be cause for concern," as many youth leave school to undertake activities outside the labour market such as travelling or volunteering. Unemployment in this age group rests at 3%. The writers of this report emphasise that this report is an initial overview, but that the analysis must be extended over the long-term.

**Terman, Lewis M, Robert R. Sears, Lee j. Cronbach, and Pauline S. Sears. "Terman Life Cycle Study of Children with High Ability." *Harvard University: The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Murray Research Centre*. [www.radcliffe.edu/murray](http://www.radcliffe.edu/murray). Murray Archive Date, 1996.**

This pioneering longitudinal study began by comparing a teacher-selected group of children with high IQ's from (mostly) urban California with children in the general population to discover similarities and differences. Research continued from 1922 until the

present with follow-ups every five years in order to explore the long-term development of gifted children. This is the lengthiest longitudinal study ever conducted.

As the questionnaire devised for young children could not remain the same as the population aged, new series of questions were devised at each five-year interval. The children in 1922 reported on school, interests and reading choices and again on the same in 1936 along with additional questions about life history and family relationships. In 1940 the questions were extended into the areas of the subject's marriage and children and future plans, with similar follow-ups in 1950-1960. From 1972, 1977 and 1982 the questionnaires dealt with problems of older people – retirement, aging etc. Besides the standardized tests (Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test and other intelligence testing from the time) there were also scales, listings and open-ended questions which were coded and recorded.

The Terman longitudinal study highlights the necessity of allowing a panel study of this kind to evolve and change as the population under question ages and develops. In fact, in 1945, the Terman study, on the request of the participants, sent out a brief two-page questionnaire concerning the effects of military service during World War Two. The broader purposes of longitudinal research, fully understanding the variables present in the life course of participants and the influence of those variables on performance, are best met when the questionnaire is flexible and adapts to allow emerging issues to be isolated and investigated.

In addition, the Terman study overall has a low attrition rate for such a lengthy study. There were 1,528 participants in 1922 and by 1983, 863 participants were still in contact. Though this may initially seem like a low number, we must remember that this study began in 1922 and 410 participants were deceased in 1983. Interesting to note is that only 36 participants voluntarily withdrew from the study and 214 were marked as "unknown" in 1983, which meant there had been no contact since 1977. Though it is difficult to define the attrition rate for this study because of the sporadic response to the numerous follow-ups, what can be said is that in 1982 data exists for 75% of men and 80% of women who are not known to be dead. The Terman study seems to show that hand-picking participants and remaining in contact with them is enough to keep participants involved in a longitudinal study, even for a life-time.

### **III. 2. Overview of primary articles used in this study on populations of adults with learning disabilities.**

**Kay Langmuir, “National project helps overcome accommodation issues,” *In the News, Queen’s Gazette*, March 10, 2008, p. 5.**

Disputes over accommodating disabilities comprise the largest category of human rights complaints in Ontario. As students arrive at college and university increasingly aware of their rights, and accommodation requests increase in number and complexity, faculty regard the issue as a challenge to academic integrity. As a consequence, a new pilot project has been created to help alleviate potentially litigious situations in the post-secondary arena. The Queen’s based pilot, Post-Secondary Accessibility Consulting Team (PACT) has been funded for one year.

**Stephanie Dunnwind, “Learning disabled young adults need some independence, author advise,” in *The Seattle Times*, June 23, 2007.**

This article is a book review for a new publication by Anne Ford, entitled, On Their Own: Your Adult Child with Learning Disabilities and ADHD. Ford notes that “learning disabilities don’t go away,” but supportive parents have to learn to allow their adult children to become independent. Ford asserts this despite the fact that a common thread between successful LD people is that their parents were very supportive.

Still, parents have to realize that at a certain point adult children with learning disabilities must learn to be adults in all respects. Ford encourages parents to continue to be supportive about safety and finances, but to provide space on social issues and employment. Though it may be difficult for parents to watch as their children make mistakes, perhaps taking on jobs for which they are not suited, it is part of the learning process: “They may lose a job or two, but your role is to be there to tell them it’s not the end of the world and help them to get back in the saddle to try something new.”

**Virginia Galt, “It takes ingenuity and persistence to succeed, disabled workers say,” *Globe & Mail*, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007.**

Ryerson University and the Royal Bank of Canada have published the results of a new survey about the realities of working life for employees with disabilities. The report cites the many difficulties employees face as well as the enormous pride they receive from working in a competitive and professional environment.

The report is co-authored by Catherine Frazee, the former Ontario Human Rights Commissioner, who states that employees with disabilities, “are persistent and ingenious in balancing the complex demands of working in the corporation.”

Unfortunately, there also exists a phenomenon of workers feeling the need to hide in the workplace. “Practicing concealment is a ‘second job’ layered into their work...A strong example comes from employees who use the distance and invisibility provided by e-mail and phone interactions to establish able-bodied virtual identities.” As a consequence, some employees quietly limit their prospects for career advancement. As well, the report cites that co-workers and managers often felt disabled workers might be slower and less productive than able-bodied workers.

The report says that disabled employees are skilled at learning which co-workers and managers they can trust to ask for help. The best managers are those who have friends or family members with disabilities.

**“Participation and Activity Limitation Survey,” The Daily, Monday, December 3, 2007.**

Statistics Canada has issued a report based on data from the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS). The report cites that an estimated 4.4 million Canadians—one in every seven—has a disability. That figure represents an increase of over three-quarters of a million in just five years (12.4% of the population in 2001, increased to 14.4% by 2006).

Most significant in the report to our *Transitions* Longitudinal Study, is the fact that learning disabilities underwent a large increase, not just for children but for adults as well. For children 5 to 14, learning disabilities joined chronic conditions as the most common form of disability. Astonishingly, for children aged 5-14, 69.3% of those with a disability reported a learning disability. Thus 121,080 or 3.2% of all children age 5-14 reported having a learning disability.

For adults aged 15 and over, the rate is even more astonishing with almost 40% increase in learning disabilities to an estimated 631,000 in 2006.

**Archer, Armstrong, Furrie, Walcot-Gayda, and Wilson. “Putting a Canadian Face on Learning Disabilities” [www.pacfold.ca](http://www.pacfold.ca). March 2007.**

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) released a study on the societal costs of learning disabilities in Canada on their website [www.pacfold.ca](http://www.pacfold.ca) on March 26, 2007. The research herein, begun in 2004 and costing \$302,000, purports to be unique “because it represents the first time any disability organization in Canada has requested access to Statistics Canada data surveys.” The authors examined ten different sets of Statistics Canada data, and produced a report with a three-fold focus. It concentrates on children, youth and adults with learning disabilities and assesses the specific impacts of LD on each group. For the purpose of

this literature review, we have chosen to highlight the PACFOLD data about participants in Ontario age 22-29, the same average age and province of residence our *Transitions* cohort.

The authors note that in Ontario, slightly more than one person in 100 (1.2%), age 22-29, report having a learning disability. Of these 62.0% were males. With regards to schooling, 42.6% reported less than a secondary school certificate as their highest level of schooling, and 32.5% reported attending trade school. No mention is made of people with learning disabilities who attend other post-secondary programs. Employment data is equally pessimistic, with 40.5% of 22-29 year olds with learning disabilities in Ontario being unemployed. Salary figures for those who were employed were extremely low; 26.3% earned between \$1-\$9,999 annually and 32.5% earned \$10,000 or more annually. With regards to health, results were more positive, with 50.7% reporting their overall health was excellent or very good and 46.3% saying their physical health was excellent or very good. Mental health figures were equally positive, with 47.3% saying their mental health was excellent or very good. However, when participants were asked how they handle unexpected problems, only 16.7% said they handled unexpected problems well, though 53.1% said they could handle unexpected demands well.

**Roslyn Kunin & Associates. "Literature Review on the Impact of Post-Secondary Education on Labour Market Attachment for Persons with Disabilities." Presented to The Disability Resource Network, February 2006.**

This report combines data from the Statistics Canada Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) and the Statistics Canada Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) in order to assess the impact of post-secondary education on labour market success for persons with disabilities. It applies its findings to the disabled population of British Columbia. This study shows a "strong positive relation between post-secondary education and labour market attachment for persons with disabilities." (Kunin 1) Increasing educational attainment among persons with disabilities improves their chances in the labour market and decreases the percentage of those not in the labour market from 58% to 30.3% for men and from 73.3% to 40% for women (Kunin 7). While this is also true for the general population, what this study makes clear is that higher educational attainment benefits persons with disabilities much more positively than the overall population (Kunin 9). It therefore calls for increased support for students with disabilities in post-secondary programs. The authors note that there is no research yet, linking teaching approaches, teacher qualifications, length of programs etc. in post-secondary, to success in the labour market for students with disabilities.

**Levine, Phyllis, Camille Marder, and Mary Wagner, "Services and Supports for Secondary School Students with Disabilities: A Special Topic Report of Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)," May 2004.**

This 10-year longitudinal study is following a population of more than 11,000 youth with

disabilities ages 13 through 16. This extraordinarily large population was receiving special education services in grade 7 or above in the 2000-01 school year.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 mandate that "...all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasises special education and independent living" (IDEA 1997 Final Regulations, Sec300.1a U.S. Department of Education, 1999). This longitudinal study tracks and provides the first national picture of the services and supports provided to secondary school youth with disabilities in a single year. As the study evolves it will provide a far more complete picture as youth develop transition plans, complete their high school programs, and begin to use post-school services and supports. Perhaps most noteworthy for the *Transitions* study, subsequent reports will show how services and supports received during secondary school affect students' long term support needs and outcomes.

**Robert Frengut, "Social Acceptance of Students with Learning Disabilities," Learning Disabilities Association of America (Originally published in the *Learning Disabilities Association of Nebraska Newsbriefs*, Spring, 2003).**

This article contends that while students with learning disabilities have developed sophisticated strategies for learning, many are sorely lacking in social skills. "Many students have commented that they spent too much time on their special academic needs and not enough time just socializing with friends. Sadly, and for many, without the necessary social skills, an LD student faces a bleak outlook for the future in the real world."

The article talks about the positive contribution that computer technology has made for persons with learning disabilities, but warns that the computer is no substitute for social interaction. According to Dr. Joseph LeDoux of New York University's Centre for Neural Science, emotions define who we are, and consequently, we must relate to the world in order to become integrated into it.

**Goldberg, Roberta J. et al. "Predictors of Success in Individuals with Learning Disabilities: A qualitative Analysis of a 20-Year Longitudinal Study." in *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*. 18:4. 2003. pp. 222-236.**

Goldberg and colleagues report on their qualitative analysis of interview data collected from a 20-year longitudinal study, earlier presented in Raskind et. al. (1999). Forty-one participants with learning disabilities were involved in this study that traced their progress from childhood to adult life and work. Unlike their previous research where quantitative data was statistically analyzed producing a number of significant success predictors, in the present study, the researchers focused on interview data and qualitative analysis. The main goal was to achieve deeper understanding of these success predictors from an insider perspective. The interviews were two to six hours in length and were conducted by four

experienced professionals from the fields of ethnography, clinical psychology, and learning disabilities.

Qualitative analysis of interview data validated previous findings about success predictors and their contribution to specific outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities. More importantly, the researchers gained a deeper understanding of specific cognitive strategies that shaped these predictors (flexibility, anticipating difficulties, breaking down goals into steps, reciprocal relationships with mentors, and recognition of stress triggers). They also identified several new themes, such as the profound influence of learning disabilities in many contexts, and the necessity for continued support throughout their life. Lastly, the longitudinal nature revealed considerable stability of success predictors from year 10 to year 20, with qualitative data revealing that attributes leading to formation of these predictors began to develop in childhood and remained remarkably stable over time.

The conclusions drawn by the authors are three-fold. First, their position in light of the evidence, demonstrating the impact of a learning disability across many areas of life, is that the field of research and service delivery currently has a very limited scope, focusing primarily on educational contexts. The researchers then argue for a need to broaden the spectrum of intervention strategies to include self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, goal setting, use of support, and emotional coping. They finally emphasise that these efforts are fully justified by the fact that learning disabilities are life-long conditions, as confirmed by the findings from the present study, and require continuous support from parents, teachers, professionals, and the community.

**Madaus, J. W., Foley, T. E., McGuire, J. M., & Ruban, L. M. "A follow up investigation of university graduates with learning disabilities." *Career Development of Exceptional Individuals*, 24:2. 2001. pp. 133-146.**

This study represents one of the most recent follow-up investigations into employment outcomes for post-secondary graduates with learning disabilities. The authors surveyed 89 students who graduated from a public university in Northeast United States between 1985 and 1999. The sample came from a pool of students who received special needs services throughout their post-secondary education at this university. The questionnaire used in the survey was developed by the authors who took appropriate measures to ensure content and construct validity, and they also report high reliability at 0.92 and 0.95 for the two scales.

The results support the findings in earlier studies (as reported by the authors) that indicate successful transition of post-secondary students with learning disabilities into the workforce. As shown in the present survey, these individuals are employed at rates comparable to non-disabled graduates. Their full-time employment levels and salaries also exceed those of persons with learning disabilities who have no post-secondary education. Another finding to be noted is that 66% of participants indicated they did not disclose their

disability to an employer. The two main reasons reported by those who did not disclose to their employer were as follows: no need for accommodations and fear of negative impacts on their job security.

The authors stress the importance of the findings showing much higher rates of employment by the post-secondary graduates versus the high-school graduates with learning disabilities. This conclusion is made in light of a significant body of research showing below-average employment success rates for individuals with learning disabilities who did not pursue further education after graduating from high school. While they make a strong argument for the critical importance of post-secondary education for persons with learning disabilities, they also emphasize that all participants in their survey received formal support from the Special Needs Office at the university. The authors also caution about the generalizing findings due to a homogeneous sample - predominantly young, male, and Caucasian - as well as a high national employment rate at the time of the study.

**Raskind, Marshall H. Higgins, Roberta J. Goldberg, Eleanor L., Herman, Kenneth L.** “Patterns of Change and Predictors of Success in Individuals with Learning Disabilities: Results from a Twenty-year Study,” in *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 14:1. 1999. pp. 35-49.

The exploratory research presented in this article is a part of a 20-year longitudinal study, which followed the lives of 41 individuals with learning disabilities, from their entry into the Frostig Center in California as elementary school children, to adult life, and employment 20 years after leaving the Center. In this article the authors present results of a quantitative analysis of the findings to statistically determine the best predictors of success based on data collected at four points in time during the 20-year period. Data was gathered in multiple ways: records, testing, interviews, and researcher ratings on specific success predictors. The dependent measure of success was based on judgments by four researchers with a high inter-rater reliability of 0.97, as well as specific success domains, at 0.94.

It was found that 21 out of 41 participants rated as ‘successful’. Statistical analysis determined most significant predictors of success to be: self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, goal setting, presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional stability. The authors note that these predictors were more powerful than traditionally considered IQ, academic achievement, life stressors, SES, etc. The success predictors identified showed a high level of statistical significance and accounted for a large portion of the variance in participant success (at 75%).

The authors acknowledge that all participants possessed some of the success attributes, but it was the “successful” individuals whose scores on these predictors achieved statistically significant levels. A main recommendation by the researchers concerns the current practices in special education programs that focus mainly on academic achievement. It is



argued that more emphasis should be placed on those attributes that demonstrate a high degree of predictive power as demonstrated in the present study.

**Sam Goldstein, Ph.D., “Emotional Problems in Adults with Learning Disabilities,” Learning Disabilities Association of America, (Originally published in *LDA, Newsbriefs*, July-August, 1998).**

Though learning disabilities are a lifelong condition, the consequences of LD change. Particularly as one shifts from school to work and community, the implications become more significant. Children with learning disabilities rely heavily on their parents for support. Adults with learning disabilities often struggle to find social supports. For this reason, Goldstein contends that adults with learning disabilities may be at increased risk for developing emotional problems and psychiatric disorders in adult years. However, many individuals with LD do develop a variety of coping strategies that allow them to function well in life.

**Levine, Phyllis and Nourse, Steven W., “What follow-up study say about post school life for Young Men and Women with Learning Disabilities: A Critical Look at the Literature.” in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31:3. 1998. pp. 212-233.**

This paper is a literature review that references and synthesises the important follow-up American studies regarding post-school outcomes for young men and women with learning disabilities. Thirteen studies are referenced on post-secondary education and employment with respect to students who were served and have graduated from special education programs in the United States.

This examination of the literature on learning disabilities embraces the notion that higher education is the best investment for attaining one’s aspirations and improving one’s status in life. The critical question that is of particular interest to researchers is whether the same opportunities occur for youth with learning disabilities as exist for the general population. More specifically, do students with learning disabilities acquire skills and credentials that significantly improve their job opportunities, wages, level of independence, and quality of life? This question was also of interest to LOTF during its piloting years, and, in fact, it fuelled its determination to follow a cohort of post-pilot students in the form of a longitudinal study.

Levine and Nourse acknowledge that little is known about outcomes, particularly quality of life outcomes for graduates from special education programs. Consequently, there exists a need to research, to collect both quantitative and qualitative information:

*“Despite the proliferation of follow-up studies in the past two decades, the immediate and*

*long-term post-high school and long-term post-high school lives of youth and learning disabilities who were served in special education are not well understood; little is known about the quality of life these individuals experience, how they manage (or do not manage to fit) to fit into their communities, how satisfied they are with their lives, and how their life adjustment compares to that of students who were not identified as requiring special education services.” (213)*

This review cites studies that provide empirical evidence to demonstrate that, “generally speaking, youth with learning disabilities do less well than their peers without disabilities,” a claim that students, parents and professionals have always known intuitively through experience, but whose causes and solutions remain to be explored.

The review concludes that while the attainment of post-secondary education may well hold the key to an enhanced quality of life for students with disabilities, the assumption has yet to be fully proven. The authors recommend further follow-up study in order to, “provide the empirical base necessary to advocate for improvements in service delivery, and... to improve the quality of life for our youth” (213).

**Vogel, Susan A, Faith Leonard, William Scales, Peggy Hayeslip, Jane Hermansen, and Linda Donnell, “The National Learning Disabilities Post-Secondary Data Bank: An Overview.” in *The Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31:3. 1998. pp. 234-247.**

This study reports on the assessment of support services policies, the proportion of students with learning disabilities and factors that affect differences in proportions in a national sample of American post-secondary institutions. A survey was used to investigate admissions policies, year of initiation of learning disability support services, type and location of support services, eligibility criteria for services and accommodations, the number of students with learning disabilities, and demographic and diagnostic information available. These factors contribute to a disparity across the U.S. of the percentage of students with learning disabilities enrolled at post-secondary institutions ranging from 0.5% to almost 10%.

This study references an earlier study that is worth noting in view of the subsequent success of the students who participated in the LOTF pilot programs, and more recently, the Enhanced Services Fund and the *Transitions* longitudinal study. As in most studies in the literature, this study is based on the assumption that completion of post-secondary education is the most effective means by which students with learning disabilities can become financially independent. According to Wagner, Newman and Backorby (1993), “3 to 5 years after exiting from high school, only 30% of the students identified with school-identified learning disabilities in the nation had enrolled in a post-secondary program and a discouraging one-half percent had completed a program or earned a degree.” Wagner, Newman and Backorby could not have envisioned the *Transitions* panel with comparable

progress with the general population.

**Raskind, Marshall H, Paul J. Gerber, Roberta J. Goldberg, Eleanor L. Higgins, and Kenneth L. Herman, “ Longitudinal Research in Learning Disabilities: Report on an International Symposium.” in *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 31: 3. 1998. pp. 266-277.**

This article presents highlights from an international symposium on longitudinal research and learning disabilities. Longitudinal research is presented as essential in the field of learning disabilities. According to McKinney (1994), “longitudinal research remains an under-used but powerful tool, in understanding the development of individuals with learning disabilities and its full impact on practice has yet to be realised.”

McKinney is further quoted, consistent with the symposium theme, as follows: “[a] major failing is not taking full advantage of the descriptive and explanatory power of the longitudinal method itself. Accordingly, we still lack basic knowledge about the natural history of learning disability. Specifically, we know little about how the various risk factors that have been associated with the disorder interact over time to produce learning disabilities, or how the manifestations of the disorder evolve and change over time as a function of biologic and environmental factors. Also, we have little direct knowledge that can be applied to prevent or ameliorate the educational consequences of learning disabilities by altering the course of faulty development. Such are the broader purposes of longitudinal research.”

Symposium participants noted the problems inherent in conducting longitudinal research, as follows: cost, funding, control group comparison issues, publication record, participant attrition, communication issues, missing data and excessive date. The symposium, somewhat facetiously wondered, “why would anyone want to do longitudinal research in the first place?” given these difficulties.

Nonetheless, longitudinal research with all its inherent difficulties is regarded as essential to a complete and holistic understanding of persons with learning disabilities, as they determined: “[i]n order to provide persons with learning disabilities with the proper opportunities/experiences and determine the most valid treatment/ interventions—in the long run—for promoting life satisfaction and success, we must fully understand the factors/ variables that are predictive of, and affect, specific outcomes. Again, longitudinal studies are essential for making such determinations.”

**Gerber, Paul J, Rick Ginsberg and Henry B. Reiff. “Learning to Achieve: Suggestions from Adults with Learning Disabilities.” *Journal on Post-Secondary Education and Disability*, 10:1. 1993.**

Seventy-one adults who all evidenced learning disabilities and who had achieved either

moderate or high vocational success were interviewed to obtain valuable information about how they have coped successfully with their learning disability both in childhood and adulthood. The interview process covered six facets of life: vocation, education, family, social issues, emotional issues and daily living.

“The driving factor underlying the success of the entire sample was an effort to gain control of their lives.” This study highlights both the internal and external manifestations of attaining control and in this way demonstrates an ecological perspective about the way to attain success. Internally, it is shown that re-framing the learning disability is central to bind together desire and goal-orientation into a productive process. Externally, coping strategies are shown to be most efficient when the individual is persistent in using them and is in a responsive and supportive environment.

The study insists that service providers for post-secondary students with learning disabilities consider employing an ecological perspective, one that combines internal and external coping strategies. Service providers should insist on integrated approaches “that more accurately reflect the processes used in attaining success.” As well, a holistic approach also involves allowing students to speak with other adults with learning disabilities who can relate their pathways to success and their own unique strategies.

### III. TRENDS RELATED TO EDUCATION

Definitions of terms to be used in the following sections:

#### **Definitions of Post-Secondary Education Status (PSE) as Defined by Statistics Canada**

A **PSE Graduate** is someone who graduated from a post-secondary institution and includes both Graduate Continuers and Graduate-Non Continuers

A **PSE Graduate Continuer** is someone who has graduated from a post-secondary institution but has chosen to pursue further education at a post-secondary institution

A **PSE Graduate Non-Continuer** is someone who has graduated from a post-secondary institution and is no longer continuing to study at post-secondary

A **PSE Continuer** is someone who is currently attending a PSE institution but has not yet graduated

A **Leaver** is someone who has attended a post-secondary institution but is no longer pursuing it and has never graduated from post-secondary

***Transitions Trend #1: Participants place a high value on post-secondary education. (Continuing Trend)***

In 2007, 39 participants (30%) reported being in post-secondary education, with 31 of these participants having returned to post-secondary studies after graduation. In 2008, 30 participants (32%) are currently studying, with 23 of these participants having returned for further studies after graduation.

This again corroborates data from previous Reports. In both 2004 and 2005, 45% of participants were studying at a post-secondary level, and that number was 33% in 2006.

### **III. 1. General Education Statistics**

The number of participants who report that they are currently studying remains high. Though the number of participants attending a post-secondary institution has decreased since *Transitions* began in 2005 (45% in 2005 to 30% in 2007 to 32% in 2008), we find that having 32% of participants still in school remains significant, considering the average age of participants in 2008 is 29.89.

Twenty-two participants (69%) who are enrolled in a post-secondary institution are full-time, eight (25%) are part-time, and this year none are registered as special students. Of participants studying full-time, sixteen are enrolled in University, five in a college diploma program, and one in a college certificate program.

Twenty-one of the participants (66%) who attend school are registered as a student with a disability at the Special Needs Office at their institution. Of these participants registered with their Special Needs Office, seventeen are full-time students. Five students who attend school full-time are not registered with their Special Needs office.

The participants who are currently studying continue to be a resourceful and high achieving group. For example, 4 participants report combining studies with a full-time job, and twenty of those currently studying have part-time jobs. In addition, six participants currently studying are working at a non-paid internship or placement. This ability to combine school and work shows great resiliency and good time management skills. Participants' comments on their future plans also indicate that they are combining work and study in order to further their career ambitions in this difficult job market.

One participant, who combines study in early childhood education with a non-paid internship and a part time job, writes:

*"I am currently working in my field and at Wal-Mart while I study so I am hoping the job in*

*childcare I am doing now will help when looking for a job.”*

Another participant also feels her confidence to get a job in the future results from the combination of work and study. She writes *“I have the knowledge and the skills plus the experiences to do the job I would like”*

## **III. 2. Accommodations and Assistive Technology**

Of the 22 participants currently registered at their Special Needs Office, 18 (81%) are using accommodations, while only 3 (14%) have chosen not to. This is slightly higher than the number of participants using accommodations in 2007, 69%.

Of the 30 participants currently studying, the number of participants using assistive technology is 16 (53%) and 14 (46%) reporting that they do not. This is similar to the 2008 figures, and we still believe that this figure seems low. The following devices were the most used:

- Kurzweil
- Inspiration
- Palm Pilot
- Dragon Naturally Speaking
- Read/Write
- Digital Voice Recorder
- Graphic Organizer

### III. 3. Field of Study

The following table reports the number of participants in each discipline, as compared to the fields of study data in the previous three *Transitions* reports. Arts, Social Sciences and Education continue to be the main fields of study for *Transitions* participants.

#### Field of Study

Field of Study	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Social Sciences	36	19	8	5	8
Education	0*	16	7	7	4
Arts	16	12	11	12	9
Business	13	7	9	1	3
Sciences	6	6	1	2	1
Computers	5	4	1	0	0
Hospitality/Tourism	5	5	1	2	0
Engineering	3	4	3	3	3
Math	3	1	1	1	0
Healthcare/Medical	3	7	3	5	2
Architecture	2	2	0	0	
Trade	2	3	0	1	0
Media	1	1	1	0	0
Total	95	88	46	39	30

\* Diplomas/degrees in the Education field were placed in the Social Sciences category in 2004



### III. 4. Post-Secondary Education Continuers

For the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, seven participants are still in school and have not yet graduated. This is similar to the 2007 figure of eight participants. Of these seven, four are in the program they began when they were pilot students, while three have changed programs.

The figures for this report and 2007 are similar to each other, and remain different from earlier statistics. In 2006, of the 46 participants who were currently studying, 22 (48%) had not yet graduated from post-secondary education and 59% of those were still in the program they began as pilot students.

In 2008, however, of 30 participants currently studying, only seven (27%) have not yet graduated from a post-secondary institution, and of those only four (57%) are still in the program they began as pilot students.

When asked what progress they have made toward finishing their program, the responses from the participants who are in the same program they began as pilot students were exciting. All four participants wrote that this is the final year of their program. One even reported taking *“more and more courses for interest”* before a 2009 graduation date. In addition, one participant who will finish her final two half courses in 2009 said she looks forward to beginning graduate school this year. The three students who are still studying but who changed programs, all wrote that changing programs was the only reason they are still in school at this time. One reports reaching an important goal that has continued her education: *“I was majoring in Sociology now I am continuing to do so but have added a minor in Political Science and got into Teacher’s College at York University-Concurrent Education.”*

The most common reason cited by PSE Continuers in 2005, 2006 and 2007 for not yet graduating is that more time is required to finish due to learning disability. In 2008, four participants agreed that more time was required for learning disability related reasons. However, in their further comments, these participants added other reasons like changing majors and minors and class cancellations as reasons for prolonging their graduation. In 2008, two participants said changing programs has increased the amount of time necessary to be in school. One participant also commented that he has been in his program for the regular period of time.

Also similar to the 2007 figures, when these PSE Continuers were asked if they intended to pursue further education after graduation, an amazing six of the seven (85.7%) said they planned to return to school after graduation. This is similar to the 2005 finding of 83% and the 2006 finding of 77% and the 2007 finding of 87.5% of PSE Continuers who believed they would possibly or definitely return to post-secondary studies after graduation. This is a very high statistic, and may attest to the resiliency former pilot students have developed in this challenging aspect of their lives; it also displays both a love for and valuing of education in a population which has typically struggled with academic achievement.

One participant commented: *“I enjoy school now since I found out that I have a learning*

*disability and wish to pursue advanced schooling related to my field of study.”*

The participant who is not interested in continuing further schooling honestly writes that he does not want to continue *“for a while because I’m kind of worn out!”*

Again, the fact that 87.5% of PSE Continuers plan to return to school, along with the fact that many participants have returned to school or plan to, corroborates *Transitions* Trend #2 from previous reports:

***Transitions Trend #2: Transitions participants have a higher than average retention rate than the general population in post-secondary education. (Continuing Trend)***

### **III. 5. Further Education Trend: PSE Graduate Continuers**

In 2005, we noted that 34 participants (35%) were returning to school after graduation. In 2006, this trend continued with 24 participants (17%) returning to school after graduation. In 2007, there was a slight increase of students returning to post-secondary education, with 31 participants (31%) returning to school after graduation. In 2008, 23 participants (24.7%) have returned to school after graduation. The reasons for returning to school differ slightly from the 2005/2006/2007 findings where the majority of participants have returned to school because they require further qualifications for the job they desire. In 2007 the number of participants returning to school for that reason was 68%. This year, the answers were more diverse.

Ten participants (43.4%) have returned to school because they require further job qualifications. In their comments, some of these participants mention they originally had a hard time finding work in their field, but that further qualifications like French studies will enhance their ability to get a higher paying job. One participant, who is in the military, writes that more education is required in order to become an officer, and two others who are in the field of healthcare write that with additional qualifications they can find permanent work.

Nine participants (39.1%) responded that they wished to become more specialized in their field. One participant writes: *“I want to obtain higher levels of pay in my field, but think the specialization is more important because it will direct impact my success in what I do.”* Others are pursuing more schooling because specialization is particularly required. For example, two participants require a Master’s degree for their chosen careers in counselling and psychology and one participant required further qualifications to become a professional accountant. One participant writes that though she hopes to obtain higher pay as a result of specialization, she does not *“have another plan other than stalling.”*

Similar to 2007, two participants cited love of education as the reason for continuing in school after graduation. And different from previous years, two participants wrote that they returned to school to obtain higher pay in their field. Again similar to the findings in previous *Transitions* Reports, that the majority of former pilot students who return to school to enhance their career shows a similarity between *Transitions* participants and the general population.

Of the participants who returned to post-secondary after graduation, nine participants (39%) returned to school right after graduation, 6 (26%) returned one year after graduation, and eight participants (35%) returned more than one year after graduation. Furthermore, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, we indicated that the majority of participants who planned to return to school were intending to graduate in 2008. This year we are pleased to report that 10 participants were to graduate in 2008 and 4 in summer 2009. The remaining seven participants plan to graduate in summer 2010 or 2011.

Different from data in previous reports, only 43% of *Transitions* PSE Graduate Continuers plan to return to school after graduation, many citing the desire to get Master's degrees and Ph.D.s. In 2006, 50% and in 2007 52% intended to pursue further schooling after graduation. Though the smaller figure in 2008 can be attributed to survey attrition, we can also speculate that some participants have reached their final education aspirations and are planning to enter the workforce with excellent qualifications.

### III. 6. Post-Secondary Education Leavers

In the Intake survey, we observed that 22 (10%) of all *Transitions* participants left their programs without graduating, which was notably lower than in the general population at 15%. In the second phase of the *Transitions* study, the percentage of PSE Leavers in our population dropped to 18 (9%) and it dropped in 2006 again to 10 (7%) of 141 participants and in 2007, 11 (9%) of 119 participants were PSE Leavers. In 2008, that number has decreased even further, with only four participants (4.3%) leaving school without graduating.

As in previous years, PSE Leavers were asked to select their reasons (they could select more than one) for not finishing their program of study from the categories below. The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Report figures are as follows:

- did not enjoy what I was studying - 2 (50%)
- financial concerns – 0
- cannot decide what career to pursue – 0
- found part-time employment – 0
- found full-time employment – 0

- could not pass all of the required courses to obtain degree/diploma/certificate - 3 (75%)

The inability to pass required courses remains the most common reason *Transitions* participants do not graduate. This corroborates *Transitions* Trend #3 last year .

***Transitions Trend #3: Transitions PSE Leavers cite inability to pass required courses as the most common reason for not graduating. (Continuing Trend)***

PSE Leavers were asked if they wanted to graduate from the program they began as pilot students. All four of these participants answered “no.” And when asked if they wanted to continue school in the future, three participants indicated they had no plans to continue in school, while one said they plan to return at a future time. However, this person does not know what program of study he will pursue or when he plans to return to school. When asked what he needs in order to ensure he successfully graduates, he said “*help with any reading material.*”

When asked why they had no wish to return to school, one participant cited full-time work as her reason, another cited financial difficulties, and another said “*I cannot think of what I might take that would lead to work with my limitations.*”

### III. 7. Graduation

When *Transitions* participants were first surveyed in 2004, 115 had graduated from an Ontario post-secondary institution. In 2005, 124 had graduated. In 2006, 109 participants had graduated, and in 2007 100 had graduated. In 2008, 82 participants have graduated – a decrease in numbers that we again attribute solely to survey attrition.

#### **“Primary” Graduation Statistics**

As begun in the *Third Annual Report*, participants who have graduated for the first time will be referred to as having graduated with a “primary” degree/diploma/certificate.

This year thirty-two participants graduated once, returned to school, and have recently graduated with another degree/diploma/certificate and will be referred to as having graduated with a “secondary” degree/diploma/certificate. Ten participants have graduated from three programs, and will be referred to as having graduated with a “tertiary” degree/diploma/certificate.

Of the forty primary graduates, seventeen graduated with degrees, eighteen with diplomas and

five with certificates.

### **“Secondary” Graduation Statistics**

Of the thirty-two “secondary” graduates, the highest number, 14, graduated with two degrees. Six participants have earned a degree and a diploma. One participant has earned a degree and a certificate. Six participants have earned two diplomas, four have earned a diploma and a certificate, and finally one participant has earned two certificates.

### **“Tertiary” Graduation Statistics**

Of the 10 “tertiary” graduates, four participants have earned a combination of degrees and diplomas. Three have earned a degree, a diploma and a certificate. Finally, three had earned two diplomas and a certificate.

## **III. 8. Studying and working concurrently**

For the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report*, all thirty participants who are currently in school combine school and work in some manner. This figure is much greater than the 2005/2006/2007 figures of 53%, 65% and 62%.

In 2008, 20 participants currently studying are working part-time, and four are working full-time. Six are working at a non-paying internship or placement. Those employed part-time while studying work an average of 15 hours per week and those working full-time while studying work an average of 40 hours per week. Though this year’s *Transitions* statistics are much higher than the figures for the general population (See Sandra Franke. “School, work and the school-work combination by young people.” p. 48) we still feel we are again able to assert that *Transitions* Trend #4 is a continuing trend.

***Transitions Trend #4: Transitions participants combine post-secondary education and work reasonably well. (Continuing Trend)***

### III. 9. Living Arrangements

All previous *Transitions* reports have noted that a very high percentage of our participants live with parents or other family members. In 2004, 49% of participants lived at home, and in 2005 that number had dropped to 39%. In 2006, 44% lived at home and in 2007 29% lived at home. This year, 28 of our 93 participants (30%) live at home. This percentage remains high relative to the general population where, according to *Time* magazine, only 20% of adults of a similar age live at home, a percentage that has risen from 11% in 1970 (Grossman, *Time*, Jan 16, 2005). In Ontario, the reported number of individuals aged 22-29 living at home is 36.2% (PACFOLD, Ontario, age 22-29, 1).

However, our *Transitions* population figure of 30% living at home is significantly smaller than the LDAC figure of 54.4% of Ontario residents aged 22-29 with learning disabilities who currently live at home (PACFOLD, Ontario, age 22-29, 1).

We asked participants who were living at home to elaborate on their reasons for that choice. Participants were asked to choose one of the following options which applied most directly to their situation and to elaborate in a comments section.

- Financial reasons
- Cultural reasons
- Still dependent on parents (emotionally, etc.)
- Parents are dependent on you (i.e. taking care of a parents)
- Preferred living arrangement at this time

In 2008, twenty-four participants who live at home (86%) responded that they live at home for financial reasons. This is quite different from the 2007 figure of only 47% who said they lived at home for this reason. In previous years, living at home has been the preferred living arrangement of most participants, however, this year, only nine participants (32%) cited this reason.

Similar to previous years, only five participants report that they are still dependent on their parents, one lives at home for cultural reasons, and five have parents who are dependent on them. The 2008 figures again corroborate *Transitions* Trend #5:

***Transitions Trend #5: A high percentage of Transitions participants are living with their parents or other family members. (Continuing Trend)***

The remaining 65 participants (70%) reported on their current living arrangements as follows: 23 (24%) are living with their spouse/partner, 14 (15%) are living alone, 8 (8%) are living with friends, 12 (12%) are living with spouse/partner and children, three (3%) are living with children, and three (3%) are living in residence.

### III. 10 Financial Issues

Participants were asked the question “Have you ever had student loans?” In 2005, 51% of participants reported that they had accumulated student debt, 34% of whom had accumulated a debt of \$20,000 or more. In 2006, we probed the question of student debt further and discovered that 64% reported having debt from student loans, and in 2007, 45% reported having debt from student loans.

In 2008, 57 participants of 93 (61%) report having had student loans, and 46% report still being in debt from those loans.

The amount of debt reported is as follows:

#### Percentage of Participant Debt by Year

Amount of Student Debt	% in Debt in 2005	% in Debt in 2006	% of Debt in 2007	% of Debt in 2008
Under \$5000	15%	17%	7%	4 (8.6%)
\$5000 - \$10,000	17%	17%	13%	7 (15%)
\$10,000 - \$15,000	15%	13%	17%	5 (10%)
\$15,000 - \$20,000	19%	17%	5%	1 (2%)
\$20,000 - \$25,000	7%	4%	9%	8 (17%)
\$25,000 - \$30,000	9%	14%	15%	3 (7%)
\$30,000 - \$40,000	10%	7%	11%	6 (13%)
\$40,000 - \$50,000	4%	8%	7%	4 (9%)
Over \$50,000	4%	4%	15%	8 (17%)
# participants in Debt	100 participants	71 participants	54 participants	46 participants

When participants’ debt is compared each year, we see an increase in participants who are over \$20,000 in debt. Thirty-six participants responded that their student debt prevents them from enjoying the lifestyle they want. In particular, many participants responded that their after tax

income is divided between rent and student loans and little money remains for savings or enjoyment. Many report working more than one job in order to pay back their loans.

Some participant comments about debt are positive in tone and show them working toward reducing their debt in the future: *“For the last 7 years I was either working for entry level wages or unemployed, so loan payments made it difficult to purchase things that most people take for granted (i.e., a vehicle etc). Now that I have a higher paying job things have been easier, but I’m concentrating on paying down debt so I can improve my credit score and start to get the things I want.”*

Debt comments also reflect the many difficulties our participants are facing: *“I have a mortgage on my education which makes it hard to pay for a house, and a car, etc...being newly married places significant strain on my marriage when 700 dollars a month are used up for debt payment.”*

Some participant comments about student debt are bleak: *“Because of my student loan I am unable to afford a bus pass to look for employment each month and so I have to walk if I go anywhere and it has also stopped me from being able to purchase winter foot wear as well so I have to wear summer runners.”*

In addition, some participants seem to be in financial crisis: *“I am currently being harassed by a collection agency as I did not qualify for interest relief though I was receiving EI to start a new business – go figure my current monthly payment on my loans are more than what I currently pay for rent.”*

*Transitions Trend #6: Financial concerns are impacting on Transitions participants’ life decisions. (Continuing Trend)*

### III. 11. Preparation for Employment

In the 2008 survey, we asked participants who were not currently studying and who had graduated from a post-secondary institution if they felt prepared to seek employment after graduation. Forty-one of the 59 participants (69%) who have graduated felt prepared to seek employment. This is a slight decrease from the 2007 and 2006 figures of 74% and 75%, but again corroborates *Transitions Trend #7* in this year’s report.

*Transitions Trend #7: The majority of Transitions participants, upon graduation, feel prepared to seek employment. (Continuing Trend)*



Participants were given space to comment about this question and, similar to 2006 and 2007, despite the fact that so many said they felt prepared to seek employment, the comments were quite mixed.

One participant accurately summed up her belief about the transition from school to work. She says though she feels her school prepared her to seek employment *“seeking employment is different from getting a decent job that actually pays the bills and gives one some value to their day.”*

This is a difficult sentiment to disagree with, and many participants report feeling prepared to seek employment but finding no employment available in their field. *“I felt prepared, but was unable to gain employment due to the lack of funding to hire nurses.”* And another writes *“I would say yes, but it’s just that there were no jobs available in the education field.”*

Of the 18 participants who did not feel their post-secondary education prepared them for the job market, many commented that there was inadequate support for the transition from school to work.

*“There was nothing in my school that prepared me to focus on my career. They didn’t teach me job search skills, nothing to help take the next step in my career. They only taught me about the program I was taking.”*

Others noted that their programs themselves did not provide them with enough work-related experience that would facilitate a quick transition to working life: *“the program did not provide sufficient experience to even qualify for a job as a computer programmer analyst. The program was misleading for all graduates, especially for those not in the co-op program.”*

Participants are often also struggling with problems not related to school or work like accidents, emotional problems, family issues and so on. Many wrote that complications like these have taken time away from performing an adequate job search.

## IV. TRENDS RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

**Please note:** Information on the general population outlined in the Employment section of this report comes from three major sources. The first is the National Graduates Survey (NGS). This longitudinal study measures the labour market success of graduates from Canadian Universities and Colleges two and five years after graduation. The class of 2000, surveyed initially at the time of graduation, returned results in 2002 about education, employment, debt, and living arrangements. This is the most current National study about the transition from school to work as of the date of this report. At the provincial level, the 2003-2004 Ontario University Graduate Survey and the 2001-2002 Ontario College Graduate Survey are the most recent inter-institutional reports on the transition from school to work.

### IV. 1. Salary and *Transitions* Participants

In Canada, only 47.5% of disabled individuals are employed. Persons with disabilities are, “more than twice as likely not to be working (either unemployed or not in the labour force) as those without disabilities” (Kunin, “Literature Review on the Impact of Post-Secondary Education on Labour Market Attachment for Persons with Disabilities.” p. 6). The average salary of a disabled individual in Canada is \$30,200 annually, compared with \$34,700 as the annual salary of a member of the general population (Kunin 6).

In the light of these Canada-wide statistics, *Transitions* participants have consistently been doing extraordinarily well in the labour market. In our *First Annual Report* we recorded 121 of 210 (58%) of participants were employed and in the *Second Annual Report*, 142 of 196 (72.4%) were employed. In the *Third Annual Report*, 112 of 141 (79.4%) participants were employed. In the *Fourth Annual Report*, 98 of 119 (82%) participants are currently employed.

This year, 80 of the 93 (86%) *Transitions* participants are employed. Given the Canadian population average percentage of employment and the historical difficulties of persons with learning disabilities, this is a significant achievement!

This is also a very high percentage when compared to the 2001 Census data for Ontario wherein only 40.5% of individuals age 22-29 with learning disabilities were employed. The *Transitions* employment rates in 2007 and 2008 are actually higher than the general population employment rate for Ontario in the 2001 Census, which reported 78.6% individuals in that demographic were employed (Census data as cited in PACFOLD, Ontario, age 22-29, p. 3).

The following are highlights from our recent employment data. Figures are calculated out of the total number of 93 participants:

- combine work and school: 25 (27%)
- are no longer in school and employed full-time: 43 (46%)
- are no longer in school and employed part-time: 12 (13%)
- are no longer in school and unemployed: 7 (8%)
- currently studying and not working: 6 (6%)

In comparison with the employment statistics from previous reports, some changes can be reported, though these may have to do with survey attrition. There was a small decrease in the number of participants combining work and school, from 26 in 2007 to 25 in 2008. We attribute this change to both a higher rate of graduation and to survey attrition.

There was an increase in participants working full-time from 65 in the *Second Annual Report*, to 72 in the *Third Annual Report* to 59 in the *Fourth Annual Report*. In 2008, 43 participants are working full-time. The number of participants who are working part-time has fluctuated between each report. Eighteen participants worked part-time in 2005, 10 in 2006, 13 in 2007 and 12 this year. There has also been a consistently significant decrease in the number of participants who are no longer in school and who are unemployed, 31 in the *First Annual Report*, 19 in the *Second Annual Report*, 13 in the *Third Annual Report*, 8 in the *Fourth Annual Report*, and 7 currently.

We have again chosen to discuss primarily the salaries of participants who are working full-time and not studying, as they currently represent those who have made the fullest transition to the workplace – PSE Graduate Non-Continuers and PSE Leavers. This population makes up 46% of currently employed *Transitions* participants.

#### **Salary Ranges for participants no longer studying working full-time**

<b>Annual Salary Range full-time</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than \$5000	0	0
\$5000 - \$10,000	2	5%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	0	0%
\$15,000 - \$20,000	1	2%
\$20,000 - \$25,000	5	12%
\$25,000 - \$30,000	4	9%
\$30,000 - \$35,000	8	19%
\$35,000 - \$40,000	6	14%
\$40,000 - \$45,000	4	9%
\$45,000 - \$50,000	3	7%
\$50,000 - \$60,000	7	16%
Over \$60,000	3	7%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100%</b>

In order to better gauge the financial status of our participants, in the second survey we reduced the salary range on the survey to \$5000 increments from \$15,000 increments in the intake survey. However, in the third and fourth surveys, we asked participants to state their actual gross salary. This increased our ability to compare *Transitions* participants with the general population, but makes it difficult to compare salaries between years. Thus, to facilitate comparison, the below chart is a comparison of salary ranges at the broadest level, using the \$15,000 increments from the *First Annual Report* done in 2004.

### Comparative Salary Ranges 1st-5th Annual Reports for full-time workers

Salary Ranges	2004 %	2005%	2006%	2007%	2008%
Less than \$20,000	21%	26%	13%	17%	7%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	48.5%	45%	50%	39%	40%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	23%	23%	27%	17%	30%
\$50,000 - \$64,999	7.5%	5%	7%	20%	16%
\$65,000 - \$89,000	0	0	3%	7%	7%*
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* All three participants earning over \$60,000 on the previous chart fall into this category again in 2008.

This general comparison shows a marked improvement in the *Transitions* population from year to year. The number of participants working full-time and earning less than \$20,000 annually has, mostly, decreased over time with the exception of a change in 2007. However, the number of participants earning in the \$50,000 - \$64,999 salary range has increased significantly between 2007 and 2008.

Though the number of *Transitions* participants working full-time and their salaries has risen year by year, we have never yet stated that *Transitions* participants are earning salaries equal to those in the general population. However, this year, due to the marked decrease in the number of participants earning less than \$20,000 annually - from 17% in 2007 to 7% in 2008 - and the increase in the number of participants earning in the higher wage brackets - in particular, the 30% earning between \$35,000 - \$49,999 annually - we are happy to say that *Transitions* participants are this year on par with the general population.

Our benchmark for the success of our participants has been as follows. The median earning for university graduates two years after graduation is \$39,000, and \$31,000 for college graduates. Furthermore, the national 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of college graduates earns \$24,000 annually, and the national 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of university graduates earns \$31,000 annually (Allen "Class of 2000" p. 31). With a full 17% of *Transitions* participants earning significantly less than both the national 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and the national median earnings for both college and university graduates, in 2007, we were unable to say they were earning salaries comparable to the average salaries in the general population.

However, in 2008, with a 10% decrease in participants earning in this lowest salary bracket, we are happy to report that *Transitions* Trend #8 is no longer continuing this year.

***Transitions Trend #8: Transitions participants have lower salaries and are under-employed compared to the general population. (Ending Trend)***

When these *Transitions* salary figures are compared with the statistics for Ontario residents aged 22-29 with learning disabilities, we see that our *Transitions* population is doing extraordinary well salary-wise. The LDAC report notes that of this demographic, 41.2% are unemployed, 26.3% earn between \$1 – 9999 annually, 32.5% \$10,000 or more (PACFOLD, Ontario, age 22- 29, 3). That 93% (10% more than the 2006 figure of 83%) of employed *Transitions* participants are earning salaries of at least \$20,000 or more annually, reveals what can happen when a learning disabled population in Ontario is given the resources to succeed in school and thus in the job market. This year, we happily corroborate *Transitions* Trend #9 from the *Fourth Annual Report*.

***Transitions Trend #9: Compared to other Ontario Residents aged 22-29 with learning disabilities, Transitions participants have a high rate of employment and good salaries. (Continuing Trend)***

In order to have a clearer picture of how each segment of the employed *Transitions* population is faring in relation to the general population, it is necessary to separate employed participants into PSE Leavers and PSE Graduate Non-Continuers who are employed full-time, as was done in the previous four *Annual Reports* .

## **IV. 2. Post-Secondary Education Leavers**

In the *First Annual Report*, we noted that only 22 (10%) of *Transitions* participants had left their programs of study without graduating. Similarly, in the *Second Annual Report* we noted that only 18 (9%) of participants were PSE Leavers. Similarly, the *Third Annual Report* noted that 10 (8%) of participants were PSE Leavers. In the *Fourth Annual Report* there were only 11 (9%) PSE Leavers. Thus, we concluded in each year that our *Transitions* population had a lower post-secondary attrition rate than the general population, which is 15% (Allen “YITS” pp. 6-9).

In 2008, only four (4%) participants are PSE Leavers, two of whom are employed full-time, one part-time, and one is unemployed.

In the general population, PSE Leavers are most likely to be male. However, for the past two years we noted that this trend is reversed in the *Transitions* population, with 59% of Leavers being female in 2004 and 61% in 2005. This was the case in 2006, where 50% of Leavers are male and 50% female. In 2007, six Leavers were female, and five were male. This year, three are female and one is male.

Though the number of PSE Leavers is significantly less this year, it is still useful to look briefly at the salaries of full-time employed *Transitions* PSE Leavers. One male working 41.5 hours per week earns \$20,000 per year and one female working 35 hours per week earns \$30,000 annually. Neither of these PSE Leavers considers themselves to be under-employed.

A male PSE Leaver, who may be considered under-employed because of a low annual salary, writes that he does not feel underemployed because *"always something new and interesting is happening at my job."*

With only two participants being PSE Leavers this year, it is difficult to either confirm or deny *Transitions* Trend #10 in 2008. However, for the time being, and taking participant's personal feelings about under-employment into account, we will hesitantly confirm *Transitions* Trend #10 for another year.

*Transitions Trend #10: PSE Leavers employed full-time are generally earning salaries that are comparable to graduates in the general population.  
(Continuing Trend)*

### **What are the Leaver's Reasons?**

Specific questions were asked of participants who left school without graduating. Participants were able to indicate more than one reason and the responses are as follows:

- did not enjoy program of study - 2
- financial concerns (i.e. must work a lot, difficulty paying tuition) - 0
- cannot decide what career to pursue - 0
- found part-time employment - 0
- found full-time employment - 0
- could not obtain all necessary requirements to graduate - 3

The two participants who did not enjoy their program of study did not enjoy it due to boredom and problems with course requirement respectively.

Those who could not obtain all necessary requirements to graduate commented thus:

- I failed.
- I was physically injured and no longer able to work at computers for long periods of time as needed.
- Difficulties with advanced calculus and physics.

None of these participants want to continue the program they began as pilot students. Only one has plans to return to school in the future but is not sure when she will return. She is interested in studying accounting, and believes that help with reading material will lead to a successful graduation.

Those who do not wish to return to school are not returning for various reasons. One has a full-time job, another does not think school is affordable, and another *"cannot think of what I might take that would lead to work with my limitations."*

## IV. 3. PSE Graduate Salary Statistics

Of the 82 graduates in 2008, only 52 are currently employed. Forty-one are employed full-time and 11 are employed part-time. Seven graduates are unemployed. Twenty-three graduates returned to school.

The figure of 41 (50%) of graduated participants employed full-time is lower than the 2007 figure of 53%, the 2006 figure of 68% and the 2005 figure of 61%. This can likely be attributed to survey attrition.

As salary is what is being assessed in this section, the question of where to place those who have graduated with a secondary or tertiary degree/diploma/certificate was again raised. We have decided to rank those with secondary and tertiary qualifications by the qualification that typically results in the highest paying job, beginning with degree, and moving to diploma, and certificate. Thus, if a participant graduated first with a diploma and then with a degree, for salary purposes, they are in the degree category. However, if someone graduated with a degree and then received a certificate, though those extra qualifications will no doubt be helpful for getting a job, the salary will still be assessed by the qualification that statistically pays the most, a degree.

## PSE Graduate Figures by Qualifications

Graduates	Degree	%	Diploma	%	Certificate	%	Total	%
In school	13	29%	9	29%	1	16%	23	29%
Employed full-time	24	53%	16	51%	1	16%	41	50%
Employed part-time	6	13%	4	13%	1	16%	11	14%
Unemployed	2	4%	2	6%	3	50%	7	9%
Total	45	100%	31	100%	6	98%	82	99%

## IV. 4. PSE Graduate Non-Continuer Salary Statistics

As in past *Annual Reports*, we feel that the salaries of PSE Graduate Non-Continuers working full-time are the best indicator of the success of *Transitions* participants in the workplace.

### Annual Salaries of Full-time PSE Graduate Non-Continuers

Annual Salary Range	University	%	Diploma	%	Certificate	%
Less than \$5000	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$5000 - \$10,000	1	4%	1	5%	1	100%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$15,000 - \$20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$20,000 - \$25,000	2	9%	2	12%	0	0
\$25,000 - \$30,000	3	12%	1	5%	0	0
\$30,000 - \$35,000	3	12%	6	38%	0	0
\$35,000 - \$40,000	3	12%	2	12%	0	0
\$40,000 - \$45,000	2	9%	3	18%	0	0
\$45,000 - \$50,000	1	4%	1	5%	0	0
\$50,000 - \$60,000	6	25%	1	5%	0	0
Over \$60,000	3	13%	0	0	0	0
Total full-time:	24	100%	16	100%	1	100%



In order to analyze PSE Graduate Non-Continuers properly, this group has been divided into categories, similar to the previous Annual Reports:

University versus College Graduates

Field of Study

Gender

## **University Graduates**

It continues to be the case that in the general population university graduates have higher earnings, despite both college and university graduates being equally likely to find work upon graduation. The median earnings of university graduates across Canada two years after graduation are \$39,000 (Allen “Class of 2000” p. 12). As reported in the chart below, 37.5% are under-employed when compared to their peers in the general population because they are earning salaries below \$35,000 annually.

It is again worth noting, however, that when compared with Ontario residents with learning disabilities ages 22-29, our *Transitions* population of university graduates far exceeds the highest salary figure listed in the LDAC report: 32.5% of individuals with learning disabilities in this demographic earn over \$10,000 annually, 26.3% earn \$1-\$9999 annually, and 41.2% are unemployed. The successful salaries of *Transitions* university graduates is testament to what can happen when a highly intelligent population is given the tools for success in school that directly translate to labour market success.

## Salary of Full-time University Graduates

Annual Salary Range full-time	University Grads	%
Less than \$5000	0	0
\$5000 - \$10,000	1	4%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	0	0
\$15,000 - \$20,000	0	0
\$20,000 - \$25,000	2	9%
\$25,000 - \$30,000	3	12%
\$30,000 - \$35,000	3	12%
\$35,000 - \$40,000	3	12%
\$40,000 - \$45,000	2	9%
\$45,000 - \$50,000	1	4%
\$50,000 - \$60,000	6	25%
Over \$60,000	3	13%
<b>Total full-time:</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

Despite the fact that *Transitions* university graduates are slightly under-employed when compared with the general population, this group's salaries have increased annually over the course of the longitudinal study. In the *First Annual Report*, we noted that the highest percentage of university graduates was earning less than \$20,000 annually. In the *Second Annual Report* we noted that the highest percentage was earning \$15,000 - \$20,000 annually. The 2006 figure of 46% of university graduates earning \$25,000 - \$35,000 annually was a marked improvement in this population. In 2007, the highest percentage of participants, 32%, earned between \$20,000 - \$25,000 annually. This year we are happy to report that the highest percentage in a particular category was 25% earning between \$50,000 - \$60,000, an excellent wage comparable with their peers in the general population!

Only a very small percentage of *Transitions* university graduates may now be said to be extremely under-employed – one participant earning less than \$20,000 annually (4%), which is less than the 12% in 2007 and the 15% in 2006.

In the *Fourth Annual Report* we noted that in 2007 ten university graduates were earning salaries higher than the general population average for university graduates, which was an increase of six since 2006. This year, we would like to again focus on the fact that twelve participants are earning salaries higher than \$39,000 annually. We would like to specifically highlight the six participants who are earning salaries between \$50,000 - \$60,000, an increase of one person since 2007. Also, three participants are now earning above \$60,000 annually, which is an increase of two people since 2007.

We indicated in the first four *Annual Reports* two factors that we believed influenced low

salaries of *Transitions* university graduates. The first factor was that the national salary figures we compare our population with were figures reported for two years after graduation. We estimated that many of our graduates were earning low salaries due to just entering the work force. This may indeed have been the case. This year, eight of our participants have been with their current employer for more than two years and have been finished their studies for at least two years. Of this eight, one earns \$70,000, one earns \$64,000, one earns \$55,000, one earns \$51,000, one earns \$47,000, two earn \$35,000, one earns \$5,000. Those earning the highest salaries have been with their employers the longest, except for one participant earning \$90,000, who has been working with that employer for less than one year.

In addition, wages have been increasing in high-knowledge industries, but not increasing in low-knowledge industries. Thus, lower earnings also depend on the type of work being performed by graduates.

The second factor we indicated as having an influence on the low salaries of our graduates was field of study. Field of study might have something to do with these low salaries, and will be analyzed after first looking at the salary rates of college graduates.

For a qualitative and subjective perspective of university graduates we asked participants whether or not they consider themselves to be under-employed. We defined under-employment *as being employed at a level lower than your education and work experience warrants*. Ten university graduates working full-time consider themselves under-employed. Many feel they are under-employed due to lack of workplace experience upon graduation. One participant who has been with his current employer for 1.5 years writes: *"based on education I am definitely under-employed but did not have lot of practical experience after graduating so it is hard to get jobs that are experience related."*

One participant who feels under-employed, yet earns \$55,000 annually, comments: *"Working at a university I have been told that I am not at the same earning level as well as if I were working in industry; however, I have had a number of other offers. At this point, I'm not looking to accept any of them."*

Fifteen university graduates do not consider themselves under-employed. Many participants write that they have the job their education prepared them for, and two feel successful due to having achieved management positions.

One participant comments: *"I am in a position that meets my skill set and that I find challenging. I am always learning and am constantly finding new things I need to learn."* And another writes: *"I think I was well prepared from the education I received."*

## College Graduates

While the median earnings of university graduates in the general population is \$39,000 annually, the median earning for someone with a college degree in the general population was \$31,200 (Allen, “Class of 2000” p. 12).

It is again worth noting, however, that when compared with Ontario residents with learning disabilities ages 22-29, our *Transitions* population of college graduates far exceeds the highest salary figure listed in the PACFOLD report: 32.5% of individuals with learning disabilities in this demographic earn over \$10,000 annually, 26.3% earn

\$1-\$9999 annually, and 41.2% are unemployed. The successful salaries of *Transitions* college graduates is testament to what can happen when a highly intelligent population is given the tools for success in school that directly translate to labour market success.

As demonstrated in the chart below, six of the 4 participants with diplomas (22%) who are working full-time are earning less than the average in the general population, with one participant earning less than \$20,000 annually. It is worth noting that the same percentage, 22%, earned less than the average salary of the general population last year, yet that 22% was derived from 27 participants with diplomas. This year, that 22% is only 4 people.

However, the majority of participants with college diplomas, 13 (78%) are earning the average salary for the general population or above. This figure also is higher than in the *Second Annual Report*, where 50% were earning in that salary range as well as in the *Third Annual Report* where 59% were earning in that range. This is similar to the *Fourth Annual Report* where 77% were earning in that range.

### Salary of full-time college graduates

Annual Salary Range full-time	Diploma	%	Certificate	%
Less than \$5000	0	0	0	0
\$5000 - \$10,000	1	5%	1	100%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	0	0	0	0
\$15,000 - \$20,000	0	0	0	0
\$20,000 - \$25,000	2	12%	0	0
\$25,000 - \$30,000	1	5%	0	0
\$30,000 - \$35,000	6	38%	0	0
\$35,000 - \$40,000	2	12%	0	0
\$40,000 - \$45,000	3	18%	0	0
\$45,000 - \$50,000	1	5%	0	0
\$50,000 - \$60,000	1	5%	0	0
Over \$60,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Total full-time:</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>

In our *Second Annual Report*, we noted that like our university graduates, many *Transitions* college graduates are well below the national median annual earnings for college graduates in the general population. The national 25th percentile of college graduates earns \$24,000 annually. However, in 2006, we noticed that only three college graduates with diplomas were earning under this salary range and in 2007 there were only four earning in that range. This year there are only three earning in that salary range. This indicates that under-employment has gone down significantly in this group, something we also observed in the *Fourth Annual Report*.

On a provincial level, the 2001-2002 Provincial Overview of Survey Results of Ontario College Students reveals that the average annual salary of a college graduate employed in a full-time job related to their field of study was \$31,040. Though this survey shows that 87.2% of college graduates are employed, only 73% are employed full-time and of those employed full-time, only 54% are employed in a related field. Therefore, as noted in our last report, though the survey criteria for the provincial and national surveys regarding college graduates' salaries were different, the reported earnings were remarkably close: \$31,200 as the median of the national study and \$31,040 for the average earnings in the provincial Study.

Since the national trend toward low wages and temporary positions for recent entrants into the workforce holds for college graduates, it is important to look at whether those earning lower salaries are doing so because of having recently begun working. We asked participants how long they have been working at their current job.

Unlike our university graduates, we cannot say that those who have been working the longest are earning the highest salaries. The two participants who have been working the longest, 6

years, are earning \$28,000 and \$35,000. One participant who has been working for 5.5 years is earning \$55,000, while another two who have been working for five years each are earning \$20,000 and \$45,000 respectively.

Again, we felt it important to consider if our college graduates feel themselves to be under-employed. Only four participants with diplomas and one with a certificate currently working full-time consider themselves under-employed. One commented: *"I have the capabilities to work full time but in the organization I work for right now all they can offer me is part time."* Another, who has been working with her employer for one year, writes that *"I have had a change in jobs, and where I am working now I make less money, with no opportunities for growth, or to gain new skills."*

One participant with a diploma, who we consider under-employed, commented positively about her situation: *"I have just started a new job that pays well and that I enjoy."*

Many of the comments from the participants who do not consider themselves under-employed are overwhelmingly positive and many say that they are doing what they went to school for. As one participant who has been at his job for one year and earns \$30,000 annually writes: *"I've started a great new job where there are a lot of great new challenges and room to grow. The increase in pay will be coming soon."*

## Field of Study

As indicated in all previous *Transitions* Reports, field of study strongly influences overall low salaries of all *Transitions* PSE Graduate Non-Continuers, whether full-time or part-time workers. We believe this is because many participants were in the Arts and Social Sciences fields, whose average annual earnings are lower than the earnings of those in professional programs. For example, the average salary six months after graduation for a student with a Bachelor of Arts degree working in Ontario in 2003-2004 was \$32,249, and for a college Arts graduate it was approximately \$27,237 annually. In comparison, the average salary for an architecture or engineering graduate was \$51,540 for university graduates and \$38,000 for college graduates (OUGS and 2001-2002 College Graduates). Thus, *Transitions* Trend #11

***Transitions Trend #11: Field of Study likely influences low salaries of Transitions participants. (Continuing Trend)***

remains the same in 2006.

Similar to the previous *Annual Reports*, a high number of *Transitions* participants are employed in their field of study. All 52 participants who are currently employed were asked to answer the question: Does your current employment build upon your post-secondary program? This year, 39 (75%) of the 52 employed participants indicated that they were working in a field related to

their post-secondary education, while 13 (25%) responded they were not. These figures are slightly higher than previous years. In 2005 67%, in 2006 63%, and in 2007 67% said they were employed in a related field.

## Gender

As gender is often a determining factor when salary is considered in many Statistics Canada reports, we believe it continues to be important to investigate if gender plays a role in determining the salaries of *Transitions* participants. There continue to be indications that gender could end up being significant when trying to understand why some of our participants are under-employed.

Women in the general population make significantly less money annually than men do – usually \$4000 - \$8000 less. Only 41.1% of female post-secondary graduates with disabilities are employed year-round in Canada, compared with 51.8% of male post-secondary graduates with disabilities (Kunin 8).

Thirty PSE Graduate Non-Continuers, or 58%, are female. Twenty-three are working full-time.

We reported in 2006 that of the 26 university graduates working full-time, seventeen (65%) were female and nine (35%) were male. This year, sixteen (64%) are female and nine (36%) are male. In 2006, of the 38 graduates with college diplomas working full-time, seventeen (45%) are female and twenty-one (55%) are male. In 2007, the participant working full-time with a college certificate is female, and of those with college diplomas, 12 (44%) are female and 15 (55%) are female.

*Transitions Trend #12: Female Transitions graduates are more likely to experience high rates of under-employment than male participants. (Ending Trend)*

In 2005, we reported that 19% of female graduates were significantly under-employed (less than \$20,000 annually) while only 7% of the male graduates were significantly under-employed. Again, in 2006, 8% of female graduates were significantly under-employed, while only 4% of male graduates were significantly under-employed. In 2007, only two female graduates are significantly under-employed, and only three males. It must be noted that the gap has decreased considerably.

The following two tables detail the difference between male and female salaries of graduates employed full-time:

<b>Female Annual Salary Range full-time</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Diploma</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Certificate</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>\$5000 - \$10,000</b>	0	0	0	0	1	100%	1	2.5%
<b>\$10,000 - \$15,000</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>\$15,000 - \$20,000</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>\$20,000 - \$25,000</b>	1	4%	1	6%	0	0	2	5%
<b>\$25,000 - \$30,000</b>	2	8%	1	6%	0	0	3	7%
<b>\$30,000 - \$35,000</b>	2	8%	3	19%	0	0	5	12%
<b>\$35,000 - \$40,000</b>	2	8%	1	6%	0	0	3	7%
<b>\$40,000 - \$45,000</b>	1	4%	0	0	0	0	1	2.5%
<b>\$45,000 - \$50,000</b>	1	4%	1	6%	0	0	2	5%
<b>\$50,000 - \$60,000</b>	4	17%	0	0	0	0	4	10%
<b>Over \$60,000</b>	1	4%	0	0	0	0	1	2.5%
<b>Total full-time:</b>	14	57%	7	43%	1	100%	41	53.5%

<b>Male Annual Salary Range full-time</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Diploma</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Under \$5000</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>\$5,000 - \$10,000</b>	1	4%	0	0	1	2.5%
<b>\$10,000 - \$15,000</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>\$15,000 - \$20,000</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>\$20,000 - \$25,000</b>	1	4%	1	6%	2	5%
<b>\$25,000 - \$30,000</b>	1	4%	0	0	1	2.5%
<b>\$30,000 - \$35,000</b>	1	4%	3	19%	4	10%
<b>\$35,000 - \$40,000</b>	1	4%	1	6%	2	5%
<b>\$40,000 - \$45,000</b>	0	0	3	19%	3	7%
<b>\$45,000 - \$50,000</b>	1	4%	0	0	1	2.5%
<b>\$50,000 - \$60,000</b>	3	13%	1	6%	4	10%
<b>Over \$60,000</b>	1	4%	0	0	1	2.5%
<b>Total full-time:</b>	10	41%	9	46%	41	47%



## **Gender and University Graduates**

The median annual salary for a female university graduate in the general population remains \$37,000 for a full-time worker, whereas the median salary for a full-time employed male university graduate is \$42,000 annually.

We can see that seven (37%) of our female graduates working full-time earn above \$40,000 annually. This indicates that our female university graduates seem to be competing well in the job market, similar to their male peers in the general population.

However, when compared to the *Transitions* male population, it seems that in 2008 four participants (21%) earn above the general population median salary for men of \$42,000 annually.

Thus, we have no reason to conclude from this round of surveying that there is any significant gender difference in terms of university graduate salaries.

## **Gender and College Graduates**

The median annual salary of a female college graduate in the general population is \$28,600 annually, whereas a male college graduate's full-time salary is \$35,000.

We can see that one (6%) females with college diplomas earn less than \$25,000 annually. However, this is a significant decrease from the 2005 figure of 11 (28%) earning in that salary range, and less than the 2006 figure of three and the 2007 figure of two. One (6%) of male college graduates earn less than the average median salary for men, though this is significantly less than the 2006 figure of 24% and the 2007 figure of 11%.

In 2007 we can say that neither male nor female college graduates working full-time appear to be significantly under-employed.

It is also worth noting that eight men and five women earn above the college male average yearly earnings of \$35,000 annually. This does seem to indicate that though some have fallen behind the general population, many of both sexes are faring very well, and are exceeding average earnings in the general population.

## Gender and Unemployment

### PSE Graduate Non-Continuer Unemployment by Gender

<b>Unem- ployment</b>	<b>Uni</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Dip</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cert</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Female</b>	2	4%	1	2%	0	0	3	6%
<b>Male</b>	0	0	1	2%	3	6%	4	8%
<b>Total</b>	2	4%	2	4%	3	6%	7	14%

\*The unemployment rate on this chart is taken from all PSE Graduate Non-Continuers including those who work part-time. Overall unemployment rate for PSE Graduate Continuers is 27% while overall unemployment rate for all participants is 5%.

The overall unemployment rate for PSE Graduate Non-Continuers has increased slightly In 2008 to a low rate of 14%. In 2006, the majority of those who are unemployed were male, 11%, versus 2% of females. In 2007, 4% of males and 3% of females were unemployed. This year, 8% of male and 6% of female PSE Graduate Non-Continuers are unemployed. We attribute the slight increase in unemployment levels to survey attrition which has reduced the total number of PSE Graduate Non-Continuers.

Across Canada, 5.5% of male post-secondary graduates with disabilities are unemployed for part or all of the year, and 30.3% are not in the labour force, while 5.7% of female post-secondary graduates with disabilities are unemployed for part or all of the year, and 40% are not in the labour force.

Again in this report, due to the small sample size, we cannot extrapolate a definitive result for whether or not the higher male unemployment rate, especially for those with college certificates, indicates that males are having a more difficult transition to the workplace. We encountered a similar problem in the previous reports.

## IV. 5. Unemployment and *Transitions* Participants

### *Transitions* Unemployment Rate

Unemployment	Unl	%	Dip	%	Cert	%	Total	%
Female	2	2%	1	1%	0	0	3	3%
Male	0	0	1	1%	3	3%	4	4%
(Non graduate)							1	1%
Total	2	2%	2	2%	3	3%	7	8%

In the *First Annual Report* we noted that 15% of *Transitions* participants were unemployed. In the *Second Annual Report*, the percentage had decreased to 10%. In the *Third Annual Report* the rate of unemployment was 9.5%. In the *Fourth Annual Report*, the unemployment rate was extraordinarily low, at 5%. This year, the unemployment rate is again low, at 8%. *Transitions* participants have a slightly higher rate of unemployment than the general population at 7%, but have essentially achieved parity, which is a significant achievement.

***Transitions Trend #13: Transitions participants have a high unemployment rate compared with the general population. (Ending Trend)***

Unemployment remains highest in those who earned college diplomas/certificates, as was the case in the previous reports. This may indicate that some of these participants are experiencing difficulties with the school-to-work transition.

The LDAC report states that 41.2% of Ontario residents age 22-29 with learning disabilities are unemployed (PACFOLD, Ontario, age 22-29, p. 3). The *Transitions* unemployment rate of 8% is remarkably low in comparison and is testament to the fact that when governments invest in post-secondary programs that provide students with learning disabilities with the tools to succeed in the labour market, there is a direct correlation between supports given and employment.

For the past three years, *Transitions* directed a number of new questions to participants who were unemployed and who not currently studying. First, we asked if there were any extenuating circumstances related to unemployment. Four participants responded in the positive. This year two participants responded that they had serious medical problems. One participant cited anxiety related to job searching and one participant cites a plan to return to school as a hindrance to finding good, short-term employment.

We also asked unemployed participants to tell us which factors they believe will help ensure a successful job search. We asked “Please rank in order of importance which factors you believe will help ensure a successful job search. The responses below are a compilation of the most popular responses:

- Participation in a mentorship program: 3
- Resume reviews/tutorials: 3
- Mock interviews: 2
- Internet Job websites: 2
- Networking: 1

Six participants responded that they have tried one or all of these methods in their job searches to date.

## IV. 6. Life Goals and Employment

For the 5<sup>th</sup> survey, we asked the 52 employed PSE Graduate Non-Continuers about their career and life goals and how they are making progress in these areas. The answers in this section are all qualitative, and thus difficult to categorize, but we will try to give as fair a sketch of how our participants are doing as possible.

The first question we asked was “In the next five years, where do you see yourself in terms of your career?” Answers varied from wanting a new career entirely to wanting to advance their current careers. Below is a table with the most popular answers (not all participants responded):

## PSE Graduate Non-Continuer Job Goals

Career Goal	Number of participants
Job in my field of study	11
Management position	9
Same job, it's great!	5
Promotion	5
No plans, not sure right now	5
Return to school	3
Permanent position	3
A job I enjoy more	3
Different job in the same company	2
Run my own business	2
Stable job	2
Better with my money	1
Better at my current job	1

As this chart shows, participants are actively planning for their futures, and quite realistic in their plans. One participant writes: *“I think I will still be teaching, but hopefully in a permanent contract position with a classroom of my own. I’m planning on getting more qualifications to increase my hire-ability and salary.”*

One participant who is unsure where her career is progressing writes: *“At this point I do not know. I have had a number of other offers. It all depends on how happy I am here for the long term and how soon I need a change.”*

As a follow-up to this question, we asked participants “Have these career goals changed in the past year? Have you made any progress?” Twenty-six participants who are currently employed responded that they had made progress toward achieving their career goals. Seventeen responded that they were either unsure about future goals or had not yet taken steps to reach their goals. The following is a sample of their various qualitative responses:

*“Yes, because I originally wanted to become a manager at the store that I am currently working for. Now I realize that retail is not for me.”*

*“Well, my last goal was to obtain a full-time job where there was room for advancement. I believe that is there with my current job.”*

*“They have not changed; however, there has been some progression. I have recently been seconded to a position which is intended as a career growth opportunity.”*

*“My goal was to become a Database Administrator, although this is not my current job title, I am doing a lot of the same work.”*

*“I have known for a long time that this is probably not a good fit for me but I’m having a lot of trouble figuring out what would really make me happy.”*

*“I am not as sure as I used to be about wanting to be a teacher, but I want to try it on a full-time basis for a while before I possibly change career paths. I’m currently taking my Junior ABQ (which qualifies me to teach Grade 4-6).”*

We also asked participants if their current job would help them reach their career aspirations. Thirty-nine participants currently employed said it would help, while only thirteen said it would not. Those who responded that their current employment would help their career goals responded mostly that the experience they are getting in their current job is very useful.

One participant wrote: *“Working in the Federal Government has given me many opportunities to gain many office skills and meeting many interesting, important people. This will give me the drive that I will need when searching for a permanent job.”*

Another wrote: *“As a supply teacher I am able to keep up to date with what is going on in the schools and this is an asset to being a full-time teacher.”*

Even participants who are not sure what their future plans are, wrote that their current careers can help them in the future. One participant wrote: *“I am not sure what I want to do yet, but staying within this field, I think will help me down the road.”*

For those thirteen participants who do not feel their current jobs are advancing their career goals, most wrote that there is no room for advancement in their current position, or that they are working on a part-time or contract basis.

Some are very realistic about what will be required of them in order to advance their careers. One participant wrote: *“If I want to gain the skills needed to move to the next level I will have to obtain those skills through University.”*

Another, showing the frustration that many feel, wrote: *“There is nowhere to go in this company. I have reached my peak here.”*

## V. TRENDS RELATED TO LEARNING DISABILITY

### V. 1. Self-Advocacy and Resiliency

In 2005, we defined resiliency as “the competencies and abilities that some people possess which enable them to cope in the face of significant adversity and risk” and we found that the *Transitions* population as a whole is quite resilient. This has remained true in all subsequent years.

#### Life Goals

*Transitions Trend #14: Transitions participants place great emphasis on educational and career goals, while social goals remain relatively low. (Continuing Trend)*

We again asked participants to tell us their life goals, as a means for us to assess how well our population balances education and career with personal satisfaction and personal goal setting. In the *Second Annual Report*, participants responded to goal-related questions primarily with career goals. In the most recent three surveys, we encouraged our participants to tell us the goals they have in their personal lives apart from career related goals. Thus, the question we asked was: “What kind of goals (other than career) do you wish to achieve in the near future?” Participants were able to choose any goal on this list, and their responses are as follows:

- Buy property – 51 (55%)
- Get married – 41 (44%)
- Have a steady relationship – 34 (37%)
- Start a family – 39 (42%)
- Travel – 50 (54%)
- Finish school – 24 (25%)
- Pursue further education – 31 (33%)
- Be debt free – 48 (52%)
- Other – 17 (18%)

Like previous reports, relationship and family goals are quite high on participant's minds. But it is again interesting how many participants wish to pursue further education, revealing that this population has a life-long interest in learning. Also worth noting is the high number of participants who cite being debt-free as a current goal. While our cohort values education, that education does not come without cost. Those who selected “other” wrote goals like “having a

good paying job" and developing various hobbies. Others also cited spending more time with their children.

This year we asked participants to comment in further detail about their priorities. What we can see is a group of young people actively thinking about all aspects of their futures. We have selected a few examples.

*"My priorities are different from my goals. Priorities are to God, Family, Friends, and Education. My goals for life are that I would love to start having kids in the next 3 years and pay more of my mortgage off. My wife and I love to travel, so continuing to travel is always a goal for us. And I am always wanting to finish school, and one day, hopefully in the next five years that will happen."*

*"I would like to clear up all my debts, then pursue further education to further my career, and finally travel and see some more of the world."*

*"I will be traveling in two weeks which is a reward for my hard work. I hope to marry my girlfriend eventually and not live with my parents when this occurs. And of course I would like a fulltime job that pays well at this time so we can afford the rent at a decent residence."*

*"In a nutshell, I want to have a happy and stable life!"*

## **V. 2. Impact of Learning Disability on Social Life**

In order to understand how participants engage in their social life we asked participants if they consider themselves to be more social or solitary in nature. Fifty of 93 (54%) responded that they were social by nature, and 43 (46%) responded they were more solitary. There is no significant change to report in these numbers since 2005, which are reasonably similar to the general population figures, with 61% preferring social activities and 38% preferring solitary ones (2003 General Social Survey). Similarly, participants were asked how they choose to spend their free time from the following options:

- Alone: 23
- With others: 16
- Both equally: 48
- Don't have free time: 6

Twenty-three participants (25%) said they prefer to spend their time alone, sixteen (17%) prefer to spend time with others, and the majority, 48 (52%), prefer the answer "both equally". *Transitions* participants seem quite balanced in their social/solitary preferences. These numbers are almost identical to the figures in 2006 and 2007. Overall, this population seems to strike a



good social balance.

Participant comments about their preferences were very informative, and revealed many to be well rounded people with very busy lives! One participant who chose "both equally" writes: *"I'm a good mix of both. I really need my time alone but I love socializing with people and getting to know people. I sum up people pretty quick and pick the people I want to be friends with because I don't have a lot of time to spend with others."*

Another, who has moved far from home and old friends, writes: *"I really think I am somewhere in between this question. I am fairly social, but I rarely initiate get-togethers. I'm also pretty bad at keeping in touch with friends on a regular basis. But I am always trying to improve in these two areas, because I like going out and keeping in touch with my friends, but sometimes I do choose to be alone."*

Others report that they are so busy, they often rely on Online communication. *"I enjoy spending time with people, but I haven't had much time lately. I'm talking an elective downtown, so I don't see a lot of people. Right now, my social interaction comes mainly from Facebook."*

## **Volunteer Work**

*Transitions Trend #15: A high number of Transitions participants engage in volunteer work. (Continuing)*

In 2005, we found that 23% of participants preferred to spend their free time doing volunteer work. In 2006, we found that 54 participants (38%) did volunteer work at an average time of six to ten hours a month, with 11 of those participants volunteering between 15 to 30 hours a month. In 2007 that number increased to 41 participants (34%) doing volunteer work on a regular basis, the majority working between one to 10 hours per month.

In 2008, 31 participants (33%) do volunteer work, fifteen of whom work between 0-5 hours a month, and seven between 6-10 hours a month. Nine participants volunteer somewhere between 11 to 30 hours a month.

Participants who do volunteer work were asked to select from a list of five answers, the major reasons they chose to volunteer. Participants were able to select more than one answer. Twenty-five of the 31 participants who volunteer do so for the opportunity to help others. Fifteen do so for the sense of satisfaction. Thirteen volunteer in order to gain work experience and ten selected "opportunity to meet people" as their reason for volunteering. Nine participants selected "other" and described activities like helping children with sports and volunteering in classrooms in order to gain teaching experience that could be used to bolster a resume. One cited the need for "networking" as the reason for volunteering, while another simply volunteers for "something to do."

## Exercise

In previous reports we learned that our participants showed a greater prevalence toward physical activities than in the general population, where 29% of individuals spend their free time exercising (2003 General Social Survey). In 2007, Seventy-five participants (63%) said they participate in a physical activity on a regular basis. This year, 55 participants (59%) regularly do a physical activity. It is a surprising find and positive Trend that our participants double the general population rate of regular exercise.

The number of *Transitions* participants who engage in physical activity on a regular basis is higher than the LDAC figure that 46.3% of Ontario residents with learning disabilities age 22-29 who consider themselves physically “healthy” (PACFOLD, Ontario, 22-29, p. 5).

In 2006, we asked participants “What kind of exercise/physical activity do you do and how often?” As this was an open-ended question, there was a wide range of responses so in 2007 we limited responses to a list of five options. Participants are able to select more than one response. We found that in 2007 individual sports were the most popular, followed by recreational activities. The responses for 2008 are as follows:

- Group sports: 8
- Individual sports: 35
- Recreational: 30
- Outdoor activities: 16
- Other: 8

The most popular form of physical exercise was individual sports, with 35 of the 55 (63%) participants engaging regularly in individual sports. Thirty (54%) participants enjoy recreational activities, 16 (29%) do outdoor activities and 8 (15%) like group sports.

We also asked participants “How often do you do your physical activity in a week?” Twenty-two participants (40%) exercise 3-4 times a week and twenty-one (38%) exercise 1-2 times per week. Seven (13%) exercise five to six times a week, and only five (9%) exercise more than six times a week.

***Transitions Trend #16: A high number of Transitions participants engage in physical activity. (Continuing Trend)***

## Relationship satisfaction

*Transitions Trend #17: Transitions participants appear to be resilient in social relationships. (Continuing Trend)*

In order to assess the impact of learning disability on social life, we have asked participants to rate their current level of satisfaction with friends, relationships and family members. Participants were forced to select from six options, identical to options available in each previous survey. With regard to friendships, fully 63% of participants, reported that they are satisfied or very satisfied:

- Very Satisfied – 16 (17%)
- Satisfied – 43 (46%)
- Somewhat Satisfied – 21 (22%)
- Not satisfied – 9 (10%)
- Very Dissatisfied – 2 (2%)
- No friends – 2 (2%)

The figure of 63% of participants reporting being very satisfied or satisfied with their friendships is the same number as in 2007. This remains a drop from the 2005 number of 71%, but an increase from the 2006 59% reporting high rates of satisfaction.

The rates of dissatisfaction with friendships remains the same this year, as does the number of participants who report being somewhat satisfied with their friendships. This remains lower than the 2006 figure of 26%. However, the 2007/2008 figures are still higher than the 2005 figure of 18%. We are still interested to see when all participants move away from their social safety nets (school, living at home), if the level of satisfaction with friendships increases or decreases in response to work and family pressures.

When asked to rate their current level of satisfaction with relationships, including spouses/boyfriends/girlfriends, the responses in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 were somewhat different. In 2005, 'no relationship' was the most popular answer, with 36% of participants responding they had no relationship at that time. In 2006, 31% reported having no relationship. In 2007, an equal number of participants (29%) reported having no relationship as reported that they are very satisfied with their relationship. In 2008, 32% are very satisfied with their relationship, and 31% report having 'no relationship' at this time. The number of participants who were not satisfied or very dissatisfied did not change from 2007 to 2008.

- Very Satisfied - 30 (32%)
- Satisfied – 17 (18%)
- Somewhat Satisfied – 9 (10%)

- Not satisfied – 7 (8%)
- Very Dissatisfied – 1 (1%)
- No relationships at this time – 29 (31%)

In 2004 and 2005, a significant amount of participants indicated their family as a significant support, and it was not surprising to find that 82% of participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with their family relationships. In 2006 and 2007, 76% of participants were either very satisfied or satisfied with their family relationships. In 2008, 75% of participants again reported being either very satisfied or satisfied with their family relationships.

- Very Satisfied – 20 (22%)
- Satisfied – 49 (53%)
- Somewhat Satisfied – 15 (16%)
- Not satisfied – 6 (6%)
- Very Dissatisfied – 2 (2%)
- No family relationships at this time – 1 (1%)

### **Social Challenges related to Learning Disability**

In 2006, we asked a series of new questions relating to learning disability and social life. We began by asking participants if they felt they faced any challenges in their social life as a result of their learning disability. Sixty-five participants (46%) in 2006 reported learning disability related challenges to their social life. However, seventy-six (54%) responded their learning disability presents no challenge to their social life. In 2007, fifty-six participants said their social life was challenged by their learning disability, an increase since 2006. Sixty-three (53%) participants said they do not face challenges in their social life as a result of their learning disability. In 2008, forty-one (44%) said their learning disability is a challenge in their social life, while fifty-two (56%) said it does not create challenges in their social life. These figures have not changed significantly over time.

To question further those who responded that their learning disability presents challenges to their social life, we asked the question: “What would you say are the biggest challenges you currently face in social situations due to your learning disability?” As participants could respond freely, the list below is a compilation of the most common answers:

## Social Challenges

2006	2007	2008
Shyness: 15	Shyness: 20	Quick self expression in groups: 15
Self-consciousness: 12	Speech/self-expression trouble: 12	Self-conscious: 7
Memory problems (words, faces, etc.): 9	Trouble in large groups: 7	Shyness: 4
Problems with self-expression: 6	Making Friends: 4	Low self-esteem: 4
Social anxiety: 5	Anxiety: 3	Not witty: 2
Distracted: 4	Memory: 2	Anxiety: 2
Others speak too fast: 3	Reading: 1	Reading/writing in public: 3
Over analyzing everything: 2	Time management: 1	Meeting new people: 2
Loner: 2	Difficulty reading body language: 1	Difficulty reading body language: 1
Reading in public (menus, signs): 2		No time for social life: 1

Though it is difficult to gauge changes in freely expressed responses over time, what was very noticeable in 2008 was that many participants are experiencing problems with self-expression particularly in group settings, whereas in the past self-expression problems occurred in many different settings. Participant responses may show some of the pressures all young people experience in their social lives.

One participant writes: *"Sometimes I feel like I am not quick on the response when there is something said and I need a quick witty response."* Echoing the same theme, another writes: *"Sometimes I cannot think as fast as other people, and this frustrates me, and I try to keep up or remember things but I just cannot do this unless I have done it multiple times. Kind of embarrassing that I cannot remember someone's name or situation or a conversation we talked about previously."*

Some participants are also finding that their learning disability is in some way hindering the development of meaningful friendships or relationships.

One participant comments: *"Not being able to verbally express an emotion especially when I'm feeling it, I tend to pretend all is well. Not taking initiative to get the relationship I want to have. Saying no and feeling justified without having to explain. Allowing myself to be vulnerable enough to be in and maintain an intimate relationship. Having to justify why I have not accomplished or I'm not as successful as society dictates I should be."*

Other participants' responses seem to have less to do with a learning disability and more to do with the frustration of finding oneself at a different life-stage than one's peers. This feeling is shared by people of any age, and this participant's response is telling about the difficulty of this particular time in life. She writes: *"It is hard to relate to some people or to have meaningful*

*conversation or connection. I feel like less of an equal because everyone else seems to be doing jobs they love and most other areas of their lives seem so happy too."*

As a counterbalance to the above question, we also again asked all participants "Do you feel that your learning disability has given you an advantage in social situations?" Though seventy-six participants (82%), responded in the negative, seventeen participants (18%) did feel their learning disability has given them an advantage in social situations. These figures are quite similar to those in 2006/2007, though there is a slight decrease in those citing their learning disability as advantageous in 2008, from 21% in 2007 to 18% in 2008. Participants commented extensively about the advantages, and the lists below are a compilation of the most common responses in 2006 and 2007:

### Social Advantages

2006	2007	2008
Less judgmental/more empathetic: 9	Less judgmental/more empathetic: 6	New perspective: 4
Abstract/creative thinking: 5	Not shy: 4	Empathetic/intuitive: 3
Forced to be confident: 4	Quick thinking: 3	Good communicator: 3
Better memory/more observant: 3	Know own strengths/weaknesses: 2	Relate with people: 2
People skills: 3	Express feelings well: 2	Talkative/outgoing: 2
Assertive: 2	Spontaneous: 2	Sense of humour: 1
Increased intelligence: 2	Sense of humour: 1	Know strengths /weaknesses: 1
Sense of humour: 2	Socially intelligent: 1	Visually perceptive: 1
	Quick speaking: 1	
	Deal well with stress: 1	
	Humble: 1	

These participants have recognized their areas of difficulty and many discuss the ways they have adapted to help themselves in social situations. One participant wrote: *"Because of my LD, it has given me strengths in that I understand social cues, pick up on things that people don't want others to pick up on. I have the ability to communicate with people, understand them, and I can also blend in any situation."*

Two participants commented that what had begun as a form of compensation, is now a strength. *"I am more talkative than others as it is the skill I use to compensate." Speaking skills seemed to be a common theme this year. Another participant writes: "Because of my LD I developed*

*very strong oral skills and am very strong a confident speaker so this generally helps in a social setting."*

Two participants write that having a perspective different than others is particularly useful in the workplace. *"Just being able to think outside the box and being able to share with people my experiences. In recruiting, I can understand what people are saying or be able to connect with people who have had different struggles in their lives."* Another says: *"I don't know, maybe because I find that I'm able to pick things up and figure things out about how a person works a lot faster than the average Joe can. It helps me in my job a lot because I'm able to find out who's the better guy to do a certain task."*

### **V. 3. LD-Related Challenges at Work**

In 2006 and 2007, we asked all employed participants if they faced any challenges related to their learning disability at work. The responses to this general question, and their list of specific challenges provided insight into their working lives. This year, we chose to ask this question again.

In 2006, when asked if they faced any challenges related to their learning disability at work, 42 employed participants responded that they do face challenges, while 70 responded that they did not. In 2007, 42 people also responded that they faced challenges, while 56 reported they did not. This year, 21 employed participants responded that they faced challenges at work because of their learning disability, and 31 responded in the negative.

Of those who felt they had learning disability related challenges at work, the biggest challenges listed were:

## Common Challenges at work

2006	2007	2008
Memory/concentration: 11	Writing: 13	Spelling/grammar: 4
Spelling errors: 7	Spelling errors: 11	Reading: 3
Phonics: 5	Reading: 6	Writing: 3
Editing: 5	Time management: 5	Need more time: 3
Co-workers who do not understand: 4	Math/numbers: 4	Self-expression: 2
Time management: 3	Memory: 3	Time management: 2
Hiding learning disability: 2	Focus: 1	Organization: 2
Reading: 2	Confidence: 1	Confidence: 1
Paperwork: 1	Self expression: 1	Fatigue: 1
Not bilingual: 1		Math: 1
		Details: 1
		Memory: 1

## Disclosure at work

All 52 currently employed participants were asked about disclosure of their learning disability at work. Twenty-six participants (50%) who are currently employed responded that they have disclosed that they have a learning disability at work. This is slightly higher than the 48% reported in both 2007 and 2006, and still higher than the 2005 figure of 38% and the 2004 figure of 30%. Of those who disclosed their learning disability, only two received a negative response, an increase of one participant since 2007. That 96% of those who disclosed found the reaction positive is an incredible percentage, though a little less than the 99% reported in 2006/2007. This indicates a positive transition from school to work for these participants.

Fifty participants (50%) have not disclosed. Of those participants who have not disclosed, the majority (86%) said disclosure is not necessary. This figure is higher than the 2006 response of 78% but lower than the 2007 figure of 86%. Other responses included worrying that their learning disability would be considered a weakness, adapting well on his own, ashamed of her learning disability, a prior bad experience with disclosure, and having not disclosed initially but disclosing later on. Still, based on the actual positive experience most participants have had with disclosure, some people may be worrying without cause.



***Transitions Trend #18: Transitions participants disclose their learning disability at work only when necessary for the job. (Continuing Trend)***

This year, we asked participants who have not disclosed if they plan to. Eight of the 26 who have not disclosed plan to in the near future. We again hope that those, people who do not believe their disclosure will be accepted will be encouraged by the overall positive reaction other *Transitions* participants have had to their disclosure. This figure has been posted on the *Transitions* Portal ([www.transitionsportal.ca](http://www.transitionsportal.ca)), and we hope to highlight it again this year.

In previous years we have noted that more females than males have disclosed they have a learning disability at work. In addition, we have noted in previous reports that disclosure may be more important for individuals who work full-time rather than at a part-time job.

In 2008, it is again a trend that more women working full-time disclose their learning disability than men working full-time. In 2008, seven males working full-time have disclosed while 19 females employed full-time have done so. These numbers are very similar to the 2007 figures.

***Transitions Trend #19: Significantly more women working full-time disclose their learning disability at work than men working full-time. (Continuing Trend)***

### **Accommodations at Work**

Of the 52 participants who are currently employed, only 13 (25%) use accommodations at work, though this is an increase from 2005/2006/2007 where only 18%/21%/22% used accommodations.

The most common accommodations used at work are as follows:

- Computer/laptop
- Spell check
- Assistive technology
- More time
- Flexible deadlines
- Proof-reader

For those who are using accommodations, it seems they have made the transition from school to

work successfully using accommodations, though they are a small percentage of employed participants. All participants currently using accommodations said their employers had no problems providing them or that they did not have to ask but provided their own. This shows that these participants know very well what it takes to succeed and have the initiative to set up those conditions for themselves.

Still, the majority of participants do not use accommodations in the workplace. Thirty-nine currently employed participants are not using accommodations. All of these participants have not requested accommodations. And all participants, in a qualitative response to their reasoning, said they are not needed.

*Transitions Trend #20: Few participants who are currently employed use accommodations and/or assistive technology at work. (Continuing Trend)*

### **Assistive Technology at Work**

In the *5th Annual Report*, only 13 participants of the 52 (25%) who are currently employed use assistive technology at work. This is a slight increase since previous years. In 2007, 22% used assistive technology, In 2006 and 2005 it was 18% and 21% of employed participants who used accommodations.

- Speech to text: 2
- Concept mapping: 3
- Text to audio: 4
- Digital organizer: 4
- Digital dictionary: 10
- Others (tape recorders, digital books): 2

Of those who are using assistive technology in the workplace, only four requested assistive technology from their employer (the same figure as in 2007), while 9 installed it themselves or brought their own from home. This shows the independence of *Transitions* participants, likely attributable to the excellent training on assistive technology in the pilot programs.

Similar with accommodation use at work, of the 39 currently employed participants who do not use assistive technology at work, the majority, 36 (92%), do not use it because it is not necessary for their current employment. Other participants said that there is none available, one said their workplace could not afford it, another said he personally could not afford it, and finally one said that he just uses his spellchecker.

### **Relationship with Co-workers**

In 2005, 94% of participants described their working relationship with their colleagues as “comfortable.” In 2006, 96% have a comfortable working relationship with their co-workers. In 2007, 93% described their relationship with their co-workers as such. Again in 2008, 46 of the 52 employed participants (88%) described their relationship with their colleagues as comfortable.

As in previous reports, we asked participants if they interact with their co-workers outside of the workplace. Thirty-three of the 52 employed participants (63%) responded that they do spend time with their co-workers outside of work. We also asked how much time participants spend with their co-workers outside of work, and the most common response was “less than once a week”(24), closely followed by “1 to 3 times a week” (7), and the rest responding “more than three times a week.” We believe these figures again corroborate *Transitions* Trend #21.

***Transitions Trend #21: Transitions participants have good relationships with their coworkers. (Continuing Trend)***

## **General Job Satisfaction**

Participants were asked in 2006 “Are you satisfied with your job?” An overwhelming 73% of the participants responded that they were satisfied. In 2007, 74% of employed participants responded that they were satisfied. In 2008, 36 of the 52 employed participants reported satisfaction with their work, at a rate of 69%.

Participants were encouraged to comment about their responses. Some affirmative responses are as follows:

*"Yes, at this time I am satisfied, as I am learning new things everyday, and increasing my knowledge."*

*"My manager is very understanding about my requirements and my pace of work/performance."*

*"I have a good salary and I'm putting my education to use."*

Participants who were not satisfied with their current jobs generally seem dissatisfied due to under-employment. Some participants responded as follows:

*"Poor money, no security, no training, not using the skills I already have."*

*"My job is a job, not a career. Nor will it move me closer to my field of interest or study."*

*"I want to do something more challenging."*

Despite comments like these, we are prepared to confirm *Transitions* Trend #22 again this year.

***Transitions Trend #22: An overwhelming percentage of Transitions participants experience job satisfaction. (Continuing Trend)***

In 2007, we chose to ask a new question "Do you feel you are able to balance work and life? The response to this question was mixed. 56% of participants responded in the affirmative while 44% answered in the negative.

In 2008, we rephrased the question to "Do you feel that you are achieving a healthy work/life balance?" and the response was similar to the 2007 figures. 31 of the 52 (605) currently employed participants responded in the affirmative. Forty percent of participants do not feel they are achieving this balance.

Participants were asked to comment about this balance. Those who responded positively, often wrote about lack of stress at work or having financial security. Others commented that moving up in their careers has led to a better work/life balance. Some positive comments are as follows:

*"Sometimes I think it is hard going to work and coming home everyday. But however that is life, and everyone has to deal with working whether they like it or not. It is hard to find time for the family at times though."*

*"I work at a job I like, have a great family, good friends, and work out at the gym."*

*"With the new job and financial security, I am able to seriously start looking for a house I want to buy."*

Others who do not feel they have achieved a good work/life balance often wrote that they were not capable of doing everything that was demanded of them in such a limited amount of time. Here are some responses:

*"I'm not getting time to exercise. I put in 9 hours at work, even though we get every other Friday off. The commute is killing me. I don't have time to perform my magic show, I usually perform at restaurants, but I just don't have the energy now."*

*"It is hard to have balance when you hate your job this much. But until I was having so many problems at work, I had a nice balance going on there."*

*"I'm not the type of person that goes out a lot, so I tend to work a lot since I simply have nothing better to do. My employer also encourages this behaviour, so it's sometimes difficult to pull myself away to have a normal social life."*

## V. 4. Additional Concerns Related to Learning Disability

At the end of the 2008 survey, we asked participants the following question:

“Earlier in the survey, you were asked what specific challenges you currently face in terms of school, employment and social situations. Are there any other ways you feel that your LD affects you at this time that you did not mention above?”

In 2008, 20 participants answered that they felt there were other ways their learning disability affected them (37 in 2007, 35 in 2006). The fact that this number has decreased so much is encouraging.

In previous years we have listed common responses, however this year's answers were so varied, and so interesting, we include some mixed responses as follows:

*"I have been taught that respecting my 'pace' is ok, so now I seek and stick to people and opportunities that respect me and allow me to respect my pace. I have learned that writing a list of "to do's" helps me to mentally keep track of many things that often slip between the cracks. I have been taught to advocate for myself but I have yet to find a way that effectively works for me. Since my LD is invisible I often cross paths with many who don't believe my struggles and that is a struggle in itself. Although it may not be healthy, I have found that isolating myself minimizes the stresses of life and relationships."*

*"I know in the past I tried to manage my LD but not to much now because I haven't found too many reasons to deal with it. So far I am doing really well with my work but not I just thought of something I should have mentioned before on this survey. My memory is pretty poor as well. I forget easily lately, but I'm wondering if that's because my brain is not stimulated enough or if it's something else. So to prevent this I try to write as many notes as I can. Post-it notes are my best friends!"*

*"I would prefer to see this 50/50. In terms of the academic environment I have relatively managed my LD in order to achieve success, similarly to improve my relationship with my family, my girlfriend, and the few friends I have and attempting to manage my life in general (bills etc). On the other hand, the LD is a better because of the time I spend on work, probably more than others in order to combat it (the LD). I have severe difficulty in the social realm and I always make mistakes (more often than others) that become detrimental."*

Other responses include things like *"I just go for it!"* and *"I have learned coping techniques and mechanisms that help me to deal."* Generally, it sounds like these participants are facing their challenges head-on.

We also asked participants: “Do you feel that you have learned how to manage your LD?” An overwhelming 84 of 91 (92%) participant responded that they have learned to manage their learning disability. This percentage is higher than the 2007/2006 figure of 87%.

These participants were asked to describe in detail the ways they have learned to handle their

learning disability, and the following list is a compilation of the most common responses. Some responses were quite detailed, and have been marked in different categories.

Coping strategies: 41

Adaptive technology/computer: 10

Know own strengths/weaknesses: 20

Being very open/ self-advocate: 9

Give myself more time for tasks: 13

Doing the right job for me: 5

Ask people to repeat themselves: 5

Suck it up and move on: 2

Learning strategies: 7

Medication: 2

One participant wrote: *"I just live with my learning disability. I am definitely conscious of it but I do not let it affect me in my life or work. Once in a while my ADD will kick in but that is generally out of boredom."* Another participant simply wrote: *"I have learned what works and applied it."* Responses like these make us very happy to corroborate *Transitions* Trend #23 from the 2006/2007 reports.

***Transitions Trend #23: Overall, Transitions participants feel they have learned how to manage their learning disability. (Continuing Trend)***

The Provincial Overview of Survey Results of College Students reveals that only 54% of college graduates employed in a full-time job are working in a field related to their education. In 2008, 39 of 52 (75%) of employed *Transitions* participants reported working in a job related to their education.

This last Trend for the 5<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report* is interesting and we will continue to monitor a response from our participants as their careers unfold during the second half of the study.

***Transitions Trend #24: A higher percentage of Transitions participants report being employed in a field related to their education than the general population. (New Trend)***

It is certainly encouraging that 75% of employed *Transitions* participants report working in a job related to their education. Still, it might be informative to investigate what this perception means. It is quite possible that this fact is one more point of resiliency and maturation among our participants as fully functioning adults with learning disabilities. However, given that there is a subjective element to self reporting one's employment relatedness to education, we will need to probe this perception. Only with follow-up questions in a future survey can we determine if participants are enjoying the benefits of having focused their education towards clear career goals, or if there is an element of simply having low expectations. Employment and career achievements are very encouraging at the half way mark of *Transitions*, and *Transitions* Trend #24 may very likely grow into a positive research finding.

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## VIII. ANNUAL FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE 2008

### SECTION I: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Gender:    Male ☐            Female ☐

3) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Pilot Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION II: EDUCATION

5) Are you currently studying?            ☐ Yes            ☐ No\*

\*If you answered No, please skip to **Question #6**

#### IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY STUDYING

5a) Are you attending:            ☐ University            ☐ College            ☐ Certificate  
Program

5b) Field of study: \_\_\_\_\_

5c) Are you registered:            ☐ Full-time            ☐ Part-time            ☐ Special Student

5d) Are you registered as a student with a disability?            ☐ Yes            ☐ No

5e) Do you use accommodations (i.e. extended time on exams, reader, scribe, etc.) provided by the Special Needs Office at your institution?            ☐ Yes            ☐ No

5f) Do you use assistive technology to help with your studies?            ☐ Yes            ☐ No  
(i.e. Dragon Naturally Speaking, Inspirations, Kurzweil, Spell-checker, Palm Pilot)

5g) If yes, what kinds of assistive technology do you use (i.e. Dragon Naturally Speaking, Inspirations, Kurzweil, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5h) Are you currently working part-time while studying? (i.e. Less than 35 hours per week

together with classroom study. This does not include summer employment unless one is taking classes during the summer semester.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

5i) Are you currently working full-time while studying? (i.e. 35 hours per week or more together with classroom study. This does not include summer employment, unless one is taking classes during the summer semester.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

5j) Are you currently working at a non-paying internship/placement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5k) Do you currently have a paid co-op placement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5l) Do you feel prepared to seek employment after graduation? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
(Please specific about your reasons why or why not.)

---

5m) Do you face any challenges at school due to your LD? ☐ Yes ☐ No

---

6) Have you graduated from a college or university program? ☐ Yes ☐ No\*

\*If you answered No, please skip to the *Specialized Education Questions* below and follow the instructions

## IF YOU HAVE GRADUATED

7) If yes, please tell us if you graduated from more than one program:

☐ 1 program ☐ 2 programs ☐ 3 programs

7a) If yes, please select the type of each program year of graduation, and institution. (If you selected more than one program, remember to write the year of graduation and the school you graduated from for each. If you graduated with two degrees, diplomas, or certificates, please make this very clear)

a) ☐ University Degree Year/Institution  
b) ☐ College Diploma Year/Institution

c) ☐ College Certificate      Year/Institution

**IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY STUDYING AND DID NOT GRADUATE**

8a) Are you still in the academic program you began as a pilot student? ☐ Yes    ☐ No

8b) If yes, please explain what progress you have made towards finishing your program.

---

8c) If no, please elaborate on your decision to leave the program. (i.e. Did you switch programs?)

---

9a) Which factors have contributed to you still being in school? (Please choose only one reason that best describes your situation.)

- a) ☐ Decision to switch programs has prolonged studies
- b) ☐ Have been in my program for the typical time period
- c) ☐ More time required to graduate due to LD (i.e. reduced course load)
- d) ☐ Financial concerns (i.e. must work a lot, difficulty paying tuition)
- e) ☐ Love of education
- f) ☐ Concern over leaving school and having to seek employment

9b) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

10) When do you expect to graduate?      Month: \_\_\_\_\_      Year: \_\_\_\_\_

11a) Do you intend to pursue further education after graduation? ☐ Yes      ☐ No

11b) Please elaborate on your reasons why or why not.

---

**IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY STUDYING AND HAVE GRADUATED**

12) When did you return to school?

- a) ☐ immediately after graduation
- b) ☐ one year after graduation

c) ☐ more than one year after graduation

13a) After successfully graduating from one post-secondary program, why did you choose to return to post-secondary studies? (Please choose the one answer that best describes your situation and then expand on your choice.)

a) ☐ Require further qualifications to attain the job or career I want (i.e. B.Ed., trade certificate)

b) ☐ To become more specialized in my field (i.e. graduate school)

c) ☐ To obtain higher pay in my field

d) ☐ Love of education

e) ☐ Concern over leaving school and having to seek employment

13b) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

14) When do you expect to graduate?      Month: \_\_\_\_\_      Year: \_\_\_\_\_

15a) Do you intend to pursue still further education after graduation?      ☐ Yes      ☐ No

15b) Please elaborate on your reasons why or why not.

\_\_\_\_\_

## **IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY STUDYING AND DID NOT GRADUATE**

16a) Why did you leave your program without graduating? (Please choose any reasons that apply and then expand on your choice.)

a) ☐ did not enjoy program of study

b) ☐ financial concerns (i.e. must work a lot, difficulty paying tuition)

c) ☐ cannot decide what career to pursue

d) ☐ found part-time employment

e) ☐ found full-time employment

f) ☐ could not pass all the courses/requirements for graduation

16b) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

17) Do you want to graduate from the program that you began as a pilot student

☐ Yes

☐ No

18a) Do you plan on returning to school in the future?      ☐ Yes      ☐ No

18b) If yes, when do you plan on returning? Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

18c) If yes, what program do you plan to pursue? \_\_\_\_\_

18d) If yes, what do you feel you need to do to ensure that you successfully graduate?

---

18e) If no, why do you not wish to return to school?

---

### **IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY STUDYING AND HAVE GRADUATED**

19a) Did you feel prepared to seek employment after graduation? (Please be about your reasons why or why not). ☐ Yes ☐ No

19b) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

20a) Do you plan on returning to school in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20b) If yes, why do you plan to return to school? (Please choose the one answer that best describes your reason for returning to school.)

- a) ☐ To obtain further qualifications to attain the job I want (i.e. B.Ed., trade certificate)
- b) ☐ To become more specialized in my field (i.e. graduate school)
- c) ☐ To obtain higher pay in my field
- d) ☐ Love of education
- e) ☐ Difficulties seeking employment

20c) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

20d) If yes, when do you plan on returning to school? (Include month and year)

---

20e) If yes, what program do you plan to pursue? \_\_\_\_\_



### SECTION III: FINANCIAL CONCERNS

21) Have you ever had any student loans? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(If Yes, proceed to Question # 22a. If No, proceed to Question #23)

22a) Are you presently in debt from student loans? ☐ Yes ☐ No

22b) If yes, what is the amount of debt you have incurred from student loans? (Please be as exact as possible.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

22c) If yes, does your debt load prevent you from enjoying the lifestyle that you want? (Please elaborate below.) ☐ Yes ☐ No

22d) If yes, please elaborate on what effect your student debt have on your life at this time:

---

### SECTION IV: EMPLOYMENT

23) Are you currently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

#### IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

24) What is your current employment status? (Please choose the one response that best describes your current situation. Remember full-time is considered 35-hours or more per week.)

- |  |   |                                      |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| a) <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time permanent  | c) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time Permanent | e) <input type="checkbox"/> Contract |
| b) <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time temporary  | d) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time Temporary | f) <input type="checkbox"/> Casual   |
| g) <input type="checkbox"/> Paid Apprenticeship  | h) <input type="checkbox"/> Paid Co-op          | i) <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal |
| j) <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Employment (choose this if you are currently studying and know that you will be working only during the summer months and not during the academic year) |   |                                      |

25) What type of work do you do? (Please choose the category that best fits your job)

- |                           |                                  |                |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| a) Security/Corrections   | c) Retail/Customer service/Sales | e) Healthcare  |
| b) Restaurant/Hospitality | d) Office/Administrative         | f) Education   |
| g) Health and fitness     | h) Construction/Factory/Trade    | i) Agriculture |
| j) Computers/Internet     | k) Media/Communications          | l) Automotive  |

- m) Childcare/recreation      n) Accounting/Finance      o) Government  
p) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

26) How long have you been with your current employer (in years)? \_\_\_\_\_

27) On average, how many hours do you work in a week? \_\_\_\_\_

28) What is your *expected* annual gross salary for 2007? (only numbers) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

29a) For the purposes of this study, *underemployment* is defined as “employed at a lower level than your education and work experience warrants.”

As such, would you consider yourself to be underemployed at this time? ☐ Yes ☐ No

29b) If Yes, please discuss whether your career is progressing as it should be in terms of responsibility and salary based on your education and work experience:

\_\_\_\_\_

29c) If no, please explain why you do not consider yourself to be underemployed at this time:

\_\_\_\_\_

30a) Does your current employment build upon your post-secondary program?

☐ Yes ☐ No

30b) If yes, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

30c) If no, is this a choice on your part or are you unable to find work in your field? (Please discuss.)

\_\_\_\_\_

31a) In the next 5 years, where do you see yourself in terms of your career? Please elaborate:

31b) Have these career goals changed in the past year? Have you made any progress? Please elaborate:

\_\_\_\_\_

32a) Will your current employment help you to reach your career aspirations?

☐ Yes ☐ No

32b) If yes, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

32c) If no, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

33a) Have you disclosed that you have a LD at work? ☐ Yes ☐ No

33b) If yes, when did you disclose? \_\_\_\_\_

33c) If yes, was the reaction negative or positive? ☐ Negative ☐ Positive

Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

33d) If no, why have you chosen not to disclose? \_\_\_\_\_

33e) If no, do you plan to inform your employer about your LD in the future?

☐ Yes ☐ No

34a) Do you use any accommodations (i.e. extended time to complete tasks) at work due to your LD? ☐ Yes ☐ No

34b) If yes, which ones specifically? \_\_\_\_\_

34c) If yes, how was your request for accommodations treated? \_\_\_\_\_

34d) If no, have you requested accommodations at work? ☐ Yes ☐ No

34e) If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

35a) Do you use any assistive technology to help you with your work on account of your LD?

☐ Yes ☐ No

35b) If yes, what type of assistive technology do you use? (choose any that apply)

a) ☐ Dragon Naturally Speaking

b) ☐ Inspirations

c) ☐ Kurzweil

d) ☐ Spell-checker

e) ☐ Palm Pilot

f) ☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

35c) If yes, did you:

- a) ☐ Request assistive technology to be provided by your workplace
- b) ☐ Install it yourself (i.e. bring in your own)

35d) If no, (you do not use any assistive technology to help you with your work), why not?

---

36a) Do you *currently* face any challenges related to your LD at work? ☐ Yes ☐ No

36b) If yes, what would you say are the biggest challenges you currently face at work?

---

37) Do you have a comfortable working relationship with your colleagues? ☐ Yes ☐ No

38a) Do you socialize with your colleagues outside of the workplace? ☐ Yes ☐ No

38b) If yes, how often do you socialize with your colleagues outside of the workplace?

- a) ☐ Less than once a week
- b) ☐ 1 to 3 times a week
- c) ☐ More than 3 times a week

39a) Are you satisfied with your job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(Please elaborate on why or why not in the *Comments* section below.)

Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

39b) Do you feel that you are achieving a healthy work/life balance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

## **IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED**

40) What has been your employment history since graduating or leaving school?

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41a) Are there extenuating circumstances related to your unemployment? (i.e. health, injury,

maternity leave)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

41b) If yes, what are they? \_\_\_\_\_

42a) Please rank in order of importance which factors you believe will help ensure a successful job search: (1 being the most important and 7 as least important)

\_\_\_\_ Information Sessions/Workshops on employment skills/job search tools

\_\_\_\_ Resume Reviews/Tutorials

\_\_\_\_ Networking (i.e. job fairs)

\_\_\_\_ Mock Interviews

\_\_\_\_ Internet Job Sites

\_\_\_\_ Campus Career Centre

\_\_\_\_ Participation in a mentorship program

42b) Have you used any of the above strategies to help you find employment?

☐ Yes ☐ No

42c) If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

43a) Do you feel hindered in the workforce because of your LD? ☐ Yes ☐ No

43b) If yes, in what ways does your LD hinder you in the workforce? (chose any that apply)

☐ Difficult to gain access to the job that you want

☐ Prevents you from getting a promotion

☐ Slows down your speed of completing tasks when compared with other co-workers

☐ Makes it difficult to interact with your co-workers (i.e. you're self-conscious about your LD)

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

43c) If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION V: SOCIAL LIFE**

44a) Do you do volunteer work? ☐ Yes ☐ No

44b) If yes, how many hours per month do you volunteer?

a) ☐ 0-5 hours/month

b) ☐ 6-10 hours/month

c) ☐ 11-15 hours/month

- d) ☐ 16-20 hours/month
- e) ☐ 21-25 hours/month
- f) ☐ 26-30 hours/month
- g) ☐ over 30 hours/month

44c) If yes, what are your reasons for volunteering?

- a) ☐ Opportunity to helping others
- b) ☐ Sense of satisfaction
- c) ☐ Gain experience/skills for use in the paid workforce
- d) ☐ Opportunity to meet people
- e) ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

45a) Do you participate in a physical activity on a regular basis? ☐ Yes ☐ No

45b) If yes, what kind of exercise/physical activity do you do? (choose any that apply)

- a) ☐ Group sports/intramural teams (i.e. soccer, baseball, hockey)
- b) ☐ Individual sports (i.e. walking, running, martial arts, yoga, etc.)
- c) ☐ Recreational sports (i.e. work out at the gym, participate in an exercise class, etc.)
- d) ☐ Outdoor activities (i.e. camping, hiking, kayaking, etc.)
- e) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

45c) How often do you take part in a physical activity?

- a) ☐ 1-2 times a week
- b) ☐ 3-4 times a week
- c) ☐ 5-6 time a week
- d) ☐ More than 6 times a week

46) Would you describe yourself as more of a social person or solitary person?

Please explain if possible: \_\_\_\_\_

47) If you have free time, do you generally choose to spend it:

- a) ☐ With others
- b) ☐ Alone
- c) ☐ Both equally
- d) ☐ Don't have free time

## LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

48a) Do you currently live with your parents? ☐ Yes ☐ No

48b) If yes, why:

- a) ☐ Financial reasons (i.e. can't afford to live on your own)
- b) ☐ Cultural reasons
- c) ☐ Still dependant upon parents (emotionally, etc.)
- d) ☐ Parents are dependent on you (i.e. you're taking care of your parents)
- e) ☐ Preferred living arrangement at this time

48c) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

48d) If no, please chose the answer that best describes your current living arrangement:

- a) ☐ In residence
- b) ☐ With spouse/partner and children
- c) ☐ With friends
- d) ☐ With family members (other than parents, spouse/partner and children)
- e) ☐ With spouse/partner
- f) ☐ With children
- g) ☐ Alone

48e) Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

## RELATIONSHIPS

49) Regarding your *friendships*, how would you rate your current level of satisfaction?

- a) ☐ Very Satisfied
- b) ☐ Satisfied
- c) ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
- d) ☐ Not satisfied
- e) ☐ Very Dissatisfied
- f) ☐ No friends

50) Regarding your *relationships* with spouse/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend, how would you rate your current level of satisfaction?

- a) ☐ Very Satisfied
- b) ☐ Satisfied

- c) ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
- d) ☐ Not satisfied
- e) ☐ Very Dissatisfied
- f) ☐ No relationships at this time

51) Regarding your relationships with *family* members, how would you rate your current level of satisfaction?

- a) ☐ Very Satisfied
- b) ☐ Satisfied
- c) ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
- d) ☐ Not satisfied
- e) ☐ Very Dissatisfied
- f) ☐ No family relationships at this time

52a) Do you face challenges in social situations as a result of your LD? ☐ Yes ☐ No

52b) If yes, what would you say are the biggest challenges you *currently* face in social situations due to your LD?

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53a) Do you feel that your LD has given you an advantage in social situations?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

53b) If yes, how?

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54a) What kind of goals (other than career) do you wish to achieve in the near future? (i.e. in 5 years)

- a) ☐ Buy property (i.e. house, apartment, condo etc.)
- b) ☐ Get married
- c) ☐ Have a steady relationship
- d) ☐ Start a family
- e) ☐ Travel
- f) ☐ Finish school
- g) ☐ Pursue further education
- h) ☐ Be debt free
- i) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



54b) Please elaborate on your priorities: \_\_\_\_\_

## **IMPACT OF LEARNING DISABILITY**

55a) Earlier in the survey, you were asked what specific challenges you currently face in terms of school, employment and social situations.

Are there any other ways you feel that your LD affects you at this time that you did not mention above? (i.e. your relationships with family and friends, grocery shopping, etc.)

☐ Yes

☐ No

55b) If yes, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

56a) Do you feel that you have learned how to manage your LD? ☐ Yes ☐ No

56b) If yes, please describe the ways that you have managed your LD?

\_\_\_\_\_

57) Are there any supports that you used in the pilot program (i.e. accommodations, assistive technology, learning strategies, etc.) which you do not have access to now but which you feel you would benefit from at this time?

\_\_\_\_\_

58) Congratulations! You have now completed your 5th survey in a 10-year longitudinal study. We intend to continue to gauge your valuable responses, and to reward you – with a comprehensive report and a gift each year – for your contribution to this important research. Additionally, at the end of the study we will be giving a special gift to those participants who have been contributing to the study for its duration.

Thank you.

Do you intend to stay with *Transitions* for the full 10 years of the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_