

Collaboration Between Secondary Special Education Teachers and Community Rehabilitation Service Providers: A Focus Group Analysis

Matthew Wappett

Welcome to the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal* author insights podcast. I am Dr. Matthew Wappett. I'm the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal* editor in chief, and the executive director of the Utah State University Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice. It's my privilege to host this podcast.

This podcast is called author insights, because it gives us a chance to visit individually with the authors from the most recent issue of the DDNJ journal, and it gives us a chance to get to know them a little better—get some insights into who they are, and why they do what they do. Each episode of this podcast is structured as an informal conversation with the authors, and it gives us a chance to, as I said, look at their research and their article in a little different way—a more informal way. But we also like to include some fun, behind-the-scenes insights on the process of designing, implementing, analyzing writing up research, but we also talk about insights into what motivates these authors, where they get their ideas from, and why they do what they do. I think most importantly, the big reason that we launched this podcast was to increase the accessibility of the articles and the content in the journal.

The launch of the podcast is and was (both) a part of our ongoing commitment to increasing the accessibility of this journal for a wider readership. Not everyone has the time to sit down and read an entire article these days, and some people can't read or don't want to read. And more and more people are choosing to get their information through podcasts, audiobooks, and alternative methods these days. So, the launch of this podcast means that you, your colleagues, your friends, really anybody can access DDNJ's content while you're on the go, and you can share it more readily across social media and other online platforms.

We recognize that it's important to present our information through a wide range of media. We hope that this podcast will provide another alternative to access the important information that's published within the pages of our journal. So anyway, if you want to learn a little bit more about DDNJ, you can learn more and see the latest issue of the journal at the DDNJ website, which is digitalcommons.usu.edu/ddnj/. And you can download podcast transcripts in English and Spanish and learn more about our guests at the Institute for Disabilities' website, which is idrpp.usu.edu/about/developmental-disabilities-network-journal, or just go to idrpp.usu.edu and you can go under the "About" tab and you'll see the Developmental Disabilities Network journal podcast menu item there. So anyway, go check it out.

Okay. Well, with all that out of the way, I want to jump into today's conversation. Today we're talking with Tabitha Pacheco from the Utah State Board of Education, and Dr. Robert Morgan, from Utah State University. Tabitha, Dr. Morgan, and Dr. Michelle McKnight-Lizotte were authors on an article entitled, "*Collaboration Between Secondary Special Education Teachers and Community Rehabilitation Service Providers: A Focus Group Analysis*," in the Spring 2022 issue of the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal*. In our conversation today, we focus on the importance of collaboration and

communication in the provision of pre-employment transition services. We talk a little bit more about pre-employment transition services, Pre-ETS as it's known, and some of the history of the Workforce Innovations Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIIOA. So anyway, if that's all mumbo jumbo to you, we'll help clear some of that up in this conversation.

So, by way of background, Tabitha Pacheco is the lead author on this article and will be joining us here. Tabitha is a veteran educator with classroom experience in public, charter, and digital education settings, where she served as a teacher, instructional coach, mentor, special education director, and an Educational Consultant. In addition to her classroom experience, Tabitha serves on several boards, and is the director of the Utah Teachers' Fellows Program, working with educators across the state of Utah to develop their leadership and policy expertise. Currently, Tabitha works with the Utah State Board of Education as the Special Education mentor specialist. In 2013, she was awarded the Utah State Office of Education Significant Disabilities Teacher of the Year Award for outstanding leadership and commitment to students with disabilities. Tabitha earned her master's in education in special education from Utah State University under the tutelage of Dr. Robert Morgan and is a national board-certified teacher in exceptional needs.

Dr. Bob Morgan is also joining us today. Bob is a professor in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling at Utah State University. He is the director of the master's program committee, and the severe disabilities licensure program. Bob worked in classrooms for elementary- and secondary-age students as a school psychologist and a behavior specialist for 12 years. His research here at the University focuses on transition of students with disabilities from school to adult services or employment settings. He's authored three books, six book chapters, and nearly 100 peer-reviewed journal articles. He has served as a principal investigator for 41 grants totaling over \$12 million, and many of those focused on employment and transition. Bob is the principal investigator on the doctoral leadership program in interdisciplinary transition at Utah State University right now. Bob is also a consulting editor and reviewer for several refereed journals, including *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, and *Teaching Exceptional Children*.

We're really excited to have Tabitha and Bob with us today. They are both exceptionally well qualified to talk about this topic. Without further ado, here is my conversation with Tabitha and Bob.

Tabitha and Bob, thanks for joining us today. One of the purposes of this podcast is to make research a little more accessible and to put a personal face on it. Tabitha, why don't we start with you. Tell us a little bit about your background, and the path that brought you to this project

Tabitha Pacheco

Sure. I am a longtime special education teacher, special education coordinator, and have worked in the classroom for many, many years. I wanted to continue my own professional growth and knowledge in the field, so I applied and was accepted to be in the master's program at Utah State University. Dr. Morgan was my advisor, and he's been my mentor, and I was privileged to take many courses from

him, and then have him, of course, advise me as I started doing research, and so that is what has led me to this particular research project and article.

Matthew Wappett

Perfect. Well, Bob, I'm going to I'm going to flip this question a little bit. You've done transition for your whole career, it seems like. Tell us a little bit about what got you into transition and made you so passionate about it.

Robert Morgan

Well, I'm a professor in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling at Utah State, and I developed a Master's of Education and Masters of Science program, with a concentration in transition from school to adulthood. As part of that program, students were required to do a culminating research project—a thesis. In the case of Tabitha, she was very interested in conducting research on interagency collaboration among professionals, parents, and self-advocates because interagency collaboration is so crucial to the success of youth and young adults who are making the transition from school to adulthood. When a team of collaborators work together, transition can be successful; if they're not working together, youth and young adults really struggle and their and their parents struggle. So, this was a serve as opportune occasion to do to do research on interagency collaboration.

Matthew Wappett

Perfect. The article that we mentioned earlier, is entitled “*Collaboration Between Secondary Special Education Teachers and Community Rehabilitation Service Providers: A Focus Group Analysis*” is in Volume Two, Issue two of the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal*. Tabitha, can you give us a quick 2-minute summary of the article?

Tabitha Pacheco

Sure. So, the article talks about the current research as far as collaboration goes between schools, and then community providers, and what's currently happening and what's been done in other states. As a continuation of that, a look into what is currently happening in our state. We held several focus groups with teachers, and then the community rehabilitation providers who are partnered with their school district to see what's happening in their schools in their districts. Do they know what each other's doing? What are their current collaboration practices? What barriers are there? And then discussion in the research of what we found from that, and how we can make improvements in our state to deepen that collaboration and ultimately improve outcomes for students.

Matthew Wappett

Perfect. One of the one of the terms that comes up in your article is “Pre-ETS.” Those of us who work in transition are familiar with it know what Pre-ETS is, but give us a little bit of background on Pre-ETS, what is Pre-ETS? Where did it originate? What is Pre-ETS about?

Tabitha Pacheco

Sure, so Pre-ETS stands for pre and then it's ETS, “Employment Transition Services.” It's those skills and practices that individuals need to be employed. There are opportunities for them to job shadow—to have practice in a work setting. There are all sorts of skills that they can practice, you know, resumé building, or just strengths finders, what are they interested in? And starting those services really early, when they're 14 years old, instead of waiting until it's like, well, “You're graduating in a week, like you know, what you want to do”? So really starting those early and providing real-life opportunities to practice those skills so that they are ready.

Matthew Wappett

Yeah. So where did Pre-ETS begin, Bob, where did this term kind of come from? When did we start doing this sort of pre-employment transition service work here in the United States?

Robert Morgan

Okay, good. Pre-ETS was a part of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, which was a reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, or WIOA, was passed in 2014 and required that 15% of rehabilitation money allocated to the state had to be set aside for Pre-ETS for students ages 14 through 21. It was a nice opportunity to focus on transition services for youth and young adults who heretofore hadn't been there. It authorized vocational rehabilitation to either provide the service directly to students ages 14 through 21, or to contract with community rehab providers (or CRPs), to come in and deliver the services to students. In most cases, CRPs deliver the services, I think, and they come into schools, to work with students or take them into the community t to provide the services.

Matthew Wappett

So, the concept of Pre-ETS, it sounds like, is relatively recent if it really just emerged through the reauthorization of WIOA. Is that correct? We've been doing transition for a long time, but by that name, I guess.

Robert Morgan

I'll take that one. That's a good point, Matt. Teachers were providing transition services to students long before for Pre-ETS, but it was really kind of an extension of their already busy set of job responsibilities. It was difficult for them to get into the community, they had all kinds of transportation issues and that sort of thing. And so Pre-ETS really provided additional opportunities for service provision beyond the teacher, which again, is all the more reason for inter-agency collaboration.

Matthew Wappett

So that actually sets up my next question really, really well. The focus of this is on collaboration. Why are collaborative practices so important to a successful transition experience for students with disabilities? Tabitha?

Tabitha Pacheco

Yeah, so I taught special education, high school special education transition for many years, and thought I was pretty good. I thought I was a great teacher. But I did have so much to learn, and I wasn't aware of how much I didn't know. For many students, I said we were providing Pre-ETS, but mostly that just looked like handing them off to Voc Rehab, and sort of being like, "Well, I guess they're getting it." Like, "I hope it happens." When I was doing my master's program with Dr. Morgan, one of my colleagues was a Pre-ETS provider. I got to learn a lot from her. I was like, "You do what? You do what?" The same thing with me as a special education teacher, she's like, "Wait, you guys are doing that in schools. Like, I didn't know you guys did that, so we were doing it." That is sort of what sparked my interest in this is really being like, wait a minute. Neither one of us who are really qualified in our fields have no idea what each other is doing and we're repeating things or we're making more work for ourselves than is needed. So, as part of my master's program, I did an internship with a CRP for 9 weeks and so I got to act as a Pre-ETS provider and got to visit students homes and get to do all of the intake surveys, I got to go to all of the job sites. I learned so much that I was like, "Man, I wish every single teacher knew what Pre-ETS was, and what's happening, because we could be doing so much together instead of working on our own." And so that is really what sparked my own self-interest of like, I want to know more about this, I want more happening in my own school. How do I make this a reality?

Matthew Wappett

As you did this project, as you kind of dug into it, and really looked at it, what were some of the supports and some of the barriers? What were the big barriers that you discovered to these collaborative interactions? And kind of second to that, and I guess you could answer these together, or separately, what were some of your recommendations for addressing those barriers?

Tabitha Pacheco

A big thing was communication. Everyone is busy, and they're doing the best they can at their own job and are very student-focused—as we should be. So sometimes we forget to reach out to the other providers and share information or what we're working on, or we think, "Oh, I've done my part, like I've done my progress report to the student and their family," and maybe not thinking about communicating those progress reports to the other individuals who are working. Some of the inherent communication of not working in the same building as that other organization. It wasn't as easy as just walking next door to the teacher or even related service providers, you know, the speech therapists who are coming to the school building, and you're seeing them. We might not always see the Pre-ETS providers, so it just takes a little extra effort and initiative to say, "Hey, how can we communicate best about this"? Like, can

we share some, you know, emails about this, some lesson plans? Can we coordinate on a unit we're doing? So, communication was a barrier that we found in the national research that's out there, and then from the focus groups, that communication was a big thing, like, people just were not talking.

Matthew Wappett

Were there others outside of communication?

Tabitha Pacheco

Yeah, of course, and there's also some red tape issues. Paperwork becomes a big thing. Do we have consent forms signed that we can communicate with each other? You know, can I share my information with you? Is that allowed? If the parents signed it for Workforce or for Vocational Rehabilitation, does that also cover us? Some of those very real concerns and then a lot of unknowing of like, I don't know, maybe. Having to sort of work through some of those legal things. You want to make sure that you're doing things the right way. Time, of course, was a huge issue. We want to communicate; we want to look at each other's paperwork. When do we have time to do this? It took a lot of collaboration and scheduling just all show up at the same IEP meeting for 1 hour. How are we also supposed to find time to meet just with each other, in addition to the teaching we're doing and the services we're providing, to collaborate on things.

Matthew Wappett

So really, as I've listened to you talk, a lot of this is about people are busy, whether you're a CRP or whether you're a special education teacher or have some other role in the system. But in order to make this work, people have to make it a priority—people have to be willing to dedicate time, to communication and to jumping through hoops. I mean, as with any program, there's hoops, there's red tape, there's forms, there's things that you've got to do. And that has to be a priority. Now, Bob, do you have anything to add to that in terms of the barriers?

Robert Morgan

In terms of barriers? Yeah, teachers are very busy—6, 8, 10 hours a day. In the old days, I used to approach them and say, “You know what, you need to do something else. You need to focus on transition from school to adulthood and get into the community and do community-based training and do social skills training, and this, that, and the other.” They just kind of looked at me and their eyes glossed over. Pre-ETS, I think, reduces some of that barrier by making available CRPs—community rehabilitation providers. Those are professionals who work in the community with students and young adults, doing transportation training, and job shadowing, and job coaching, job placement. They talk to employers and do all the things that teachers don't have time to do. So, it's really a great opportunity—it's a way of reducing barriers by bringing to the fore, a CRP who has those skills and does direct instruction in the community. That person needs to work directly with the teacher and the voc rehab person becomes more of a contractor, or a go between. This was a nice way of looking closely at the at the barriers and how to eliminate those barriers.

Tabitha Pacheco

I also think we talked about this earlier, that Pre-ETS is a newer initiative—newer funding. So, a lot of teachers just didn't even know that it was available, or how to access it, or how to refer their students to it. When we first began this research in 2019, I think there was only three Pre-ETS providers in the state. That has grown, there's many more now. So, it was very limited in the areas that it covered and the district's—the LEAs that we're partnering with CRPs. So, teachers just didn't know it was available. Luckily, though, it has grown a lot and teachers are more aware, a lot of that I can contribute to Dr. Morgan and his work with the transition Institute, and UTAT and trying to make resources more available and help make sure that teachers know what is available to their students.

Matthew Wappett

So, this is a question that I didn't give you in the in the preliminary, but I want to ask it anyway. Because you mentioned the dates when you're doing this in 2019. Did your research and did any of your work overlap with the COVID pandemic?

Tabitha Pacheco

Luckily, it's sort of wrapped up by the end of 2019. There were some additional follow up things we wanted to do with the participants—both the CRP providers and the teachers—that we had wanted to do like at the end of March, which was right when everything hit and 2020. So, I couldn't even contact them. Schools were closed, the CRP therapy, they were closed. Everyone was closed and unavailable. So, some additional things we would have liked to have done in person or zoom or just connecting with people hit during a really crazy time. So, some of our follow up questions and information were done via email or surveys, but we were able to get it all it was just like a, you know, for all of us, like “What is happening in the world?” So, it worked out.

Matthew Wappett

So, I'm gonna build on that just a little bit because I like to give you surprises. So did the COVID pandemic—I mean, we're essentially two years into it now—did the COVID pandemic change the nature of these Pre-ETS services and that relationship between the schools and the CRPs? Or has it continued to move forward relatively smoothly? I guess the question is really did COVID impact any of this and create any unique challenges that maybe you've seen since you're working in this field?

Robert Morgan

Good question. Tabitha, do you want to take that or, or I will

Tabitha Pacheco

All my observations would be very anecdotal, especially since I'm not even in a school right now. I'm working at the state office. So, perhaps Bob, you can share your experience from the work you're doing with like the UTAT and transition Institute of how people have been able to collaborate.

Robert Morgan

I think it changed Pre-ETS, at least temporarily. I think community rehab providers having been no longer able to work in the schools with COVID, some of them resorted to online instruction, which is very different from going into the community and learning job skills. So, it, it was probably something that really limited students who were in transition at that time. Hopefully, we're able to recoup some of that now. But yeah, I think it was definitely a limitation in terms of Pre-ETS provision, much as it was a limitation to education in general.

Matthew Wappett

We've heard that reflected across not just this system, but all systems. It changed it, but we're kind of not, it's still moving forward.

This was a focus group study. One of the purposes of this podcast is to kind of put a fun human face on the research process. When you're doing any research, there's a whole bunch that happens behind the scenes, that isn't necessarily reflected in the final write up. So, one of the questions that we like to ask is, "if there was a memorable story or event that occurred, as you worked on this project that comes to mind."

Tabitha Pacheco

The focus groups were partnering the teachers at the same school that the CRPs are providing services to, and it was always shocking that they'd show up at this focus group, and they had never met each other. They had never talked to each other. And they had been working with the same students for years sometimes. And so that was always like an embarrassing, sort of awkward of like, "Oh, I guess this is an important work," because this is embarrassing. And that happened in every focus group like that. They were like, "Nice to meet you for the first time, you know, glad we've been working with the same student for years."

Matthew Wappett

Wow, that's pretty telling, I think.

Robert Morgan

Isn't that shocking. And yet, finally, they had a forum where they could meet each other. That's exactly what interagency collaboration is all about.

Matthew Wappett

So have you found that after the focus groups that by meeting each other, and maybe making that connection, that it changed their communication? Maybe you don't know that follow up? I'm just curious if that helped.

Tabitha Pacheco

I don't know it, but I hope it I guess at the end of all the focus groups, there was a lot of, you know, promises of like, okay, like, now we have each other's emails, and let's make this happen. And so, I would hope that that communication continued to happen,

Matthew Wappett

Hard to communicate if you don't have the other person's email. That's good. That's good. So, kind of taking this whole article, kind of taking this whole idea of Pre-ETS—Secondary Transition? What is the take home message from your article? What do you want readers to remember?

Tabitha Pacheco

I think, (1) the importance of interagency collaboration. (2) like we talked about taking the time to make that interagency collaboration a priority. And I can say from my own experience, that it is worth it. It will make your experience and your teaching better and stronger. And it will also improve outcomes for your students through that. So, it's, it's worth that effort. And it's one of those things, as with any relationship, like once you make the effort to make it happen, then it seems to come a little bit more natural, like it's just part of your routine. It's that this forced thing anymore—it's just a natural part of your teaching and your collaboration to include that person. So, my takeaway would be that there are so many great services in our state, so many really passionate people doing incredible work for students with disabilities and helping them be successful. Collaborate with them, learn from them, take advantage of the resources that they're providing.

Matthew Wappett

So, I'm gonna throw you a little bit of a secondary curveball here, based on that response. I'm sorry, you're given me some good things to think about. So, are there things that schools and VR can do to incentivize that collaboration? Do you have any insights on that?

Tabitha Pacheco

Sure, I can tell you some top secret info from the State Office of Education. It's not top secret. The state has since started a the STC—the state transition collaborative. It's not run by me, it's run by my colleague, Crystal Emery, where she has brought together anyone who's a stakeholder in transition (vocational rehabilitation, several community rehabilitation providers, education agencies, DSP, like all the agencies), and we have monthly meetings, and I'm part of the committee, I'm just not leading it. We have monthly meetings, and we're working on solving some of these barriers, like, “Hey, can we create a common form that says we have permission to talk to each other?” So, you know, looking at all our

forms and say, "What if we just had one form that signed permission for all of us to talk," and so trying to break down some of those barriers, also learning from each other. And so, I think from a big picture level, like at the state, all the agencies are working together to be like, "Okay, how can we collaborate better? How can we make this easier to work together as teams?" So that is happening, and it's exciting. Hopefully, we will start to see the results of that work in this next school year and years coming as we make it easier to collaborate.

Matthew Wappett

Well, one thing, Bob can probably chime in on this, that I've noticed in various programs is that if the state agency, whether that's the State Department of Ed or VR, or the Developmental Disabilities agency, if they make it a priority, and they facilitate high-level conversations, frequently, that will trickle down, and it creates a culture of collaboration that hopefully goes throughout the system. I don't know if Bob, do you have any insights on that?

Robert Morgan

Yeah, I think that's definitely happening. You know, it's a relative thing. But on a continuum, I think we're moving towards more and more collaboration. Thank goodness State Board of Education has taken it on to develop forums that everyone uses. Imagine that across all those agencies, which is a major undertaking, but it looks as if school records and records for adults with disabilities are, of course, confidential. So, information cannot be released unless parents or legal guardians provide consent. I think that's a starting point for creating a form that works for everybody. So, more power to that effort.

Matthew Wappett

Yeah. So, are there again, another follow up question? Sorry. Keeping you on your toes today. So, your experience has primarily been here in Utah? Are there other states that have developed a common form and have looked at different ways of facilitating collaboration and Pre-ETS?

Robert Morgan

That's a good question. I'm not really sure. Tabitha might have some insight on that. I think collaboration in general has become a priority everywhere, because we know from the research that interagency collaboration is an evidence-based practice. So, it leads to improved post-school outcomes. So, I think everybody is kind of focusing on collaboration and how they can make it happen.

Matthew Wappett

Tabitha, do you want to add to that?

Tabitha Pacheco

I do not know the answer if other states are doing it, but I agree with Bob that is definitely a hot topic right now—this collaboration and how do we make it happen? I know lots of people are working on it within our state. In addition to this STC, we have the Transition Institute, the transition conference, the Utah Transition Action Team. We have lots of groups that are working to try make resources available to students by working with the adults who provide those, so it's happening. We're working on it and it is making a difference.

Matthew Wappett

Perfect. Okay, so the last two questions are my favorite ones—they totally shift to you. This is about you as a researcher. Everybody who's in this field in disability, special education has a particular reason. So, I'm going to ask both of you this question, what motivates you to do this work? Why do you do what you do? Why don't we start with you Tabitha.

Tabitha Pacheco

So, I've always loved working with people, and I especially love working with individuals with disabilities or different ways of learning and thinking. So that's always been a passion of mine, I've always been an advocate. For me to do the best at my job, I have to continue developing my own skills and research and stay current on best practices. I don't think I will ever stop learning and participating in professional learning and furthering my education. But mostly, it really is just the love of the people. This, you know, the individuals I'm serving, and I don't think you'll find, like a more passionate group of individuals than people who work in education, and especially people who work in special education, like just the best people who are trying to make the world a better place. It sounds so cheesy, but so true. And I am inspired daily by the people I get to work with because everyone's just really trying to make the world a better place. And I love that.

Matthew Wappett

Bob, let me turn to you at that question. You've done this for a few years longer than Tabitha. What motivated you to get into this? Why do you do what you do?

Robert Morgan

You know, I guess it sounds cliché, but I wanted to make a difference. And I was so impressed, I guess, early in my career, how people with disabilities had amazing abilities. All you had to really do was get to know them and be a part of their world and see the things that they are capable of doing. I mean, it was different for each individual. They had capabilities that most of us didn't see—they were being marginalized and ostracized for reasons that really weren't fair to them, because they all had something to contribute. Many of them have learned to become contributing citizens to their community. It's just a matter of advocating for them and helping them out and letting them become what they can become. So, I'm very passionate about it still and going all the way back to my early work in a state institution in Kansas. It was like, you know, these are people. These are people who can contribute to

their community. And it was just a matter of sort of unlocking that and letting them do what they could do.

Matthew Wappett

One of the reasons that we started this podcast was to make research more inclusive and accessible. Not everybody wants to go find an article and read it online. And so we thought, well, if we have more informal conversations, it's going to make these ideas, this research more accessible to a broader audience who may not traditionally go to find an academic journal. So, kind of on that note, a big focus of the journal has been trying to make research more inclusive and accessible. So, the last question that we like to ask is, what is one thing that you have been doing to make your own work more inclusive and accessible? So why don't I start with you Tabitha on that one.

Tabitha Pacheco

So, one thing I've been doing and that I regret that I wasn't doing longer and earlier in my career is making sure that the materials I am sharing and producing are 508 compliant and accessible. Especially as a special educator, that should be something that I'm doing, and all of us should be doing all the time. Just those little things to make things more accessible, whether it is through your professional work PowerPoints, or even in your personal life on you know, social media, things like adding that, you know, alternate description to your images, so that your life and the things that you're sharing out into the world are accessible to everyone. And so that has been a little change that I've made and making sure that I am making materials that I share accessible.

Matthew Wappett

That's a big one. That's actually a huge one. I was actually in a meeting this morning, and it really is shocking how many materials and conferences and stuff are still being put out that are completely inaccessible in the disability field.

Tabitha Pacheco

And as someone who's now that I'm at the state office, I oftentimes have to vet those PowerPoints, and it is a lot of work. If someone sends something in that is not 508 compliant to then make it compliant, especially if everything they've submitted as a screenshot. So yeah, it's a big deal. And it's worth making that effort or doing it right or trying to do it to start with so that everyone can access what they need.

Matthew Wappett

Yep. Perfect. So, Bob, what about you?

Robert Morgan

I can think of several things. One, was the creation of something I called the Utah Transition Action Team, which is probably a misnomer. But UTAT was started 11 years ago, way back before Pre-ETS. It consists of special ed teachers, general ed teachers, career technical education teachers, community rehab providers, voc rehab counselors, parents, self-advocates, people in higher education. I wanted to bring them all together so that we could share information and be inclusive. The first meeting involved eight people around a conference table. And that was 2011, something like that. And now I have a list of 150 some odd people who come together quarterly—well, I don't get 150, but I might get 60 people together, who share with each other. They just share what each other is doing. It results in the formation of relationships across disciplines. Teachers contacting community rehab providers and so forth. That wasn't the case before 2011. People tended to work in their silo and go home and complain about how non-inclusive things were. So that's been something I'd like to continue going forward because it seems to serve a purpose in Utah.

Matthew Wappett

Yeah. I think, again, if there's a theme that's come up throughout this, it's the importance of getting people together to talk—that communication and people talk more when they're together—right? The pandemic has shown, we can very easily grow apart and isolate ourselves. But when you're together, communication happens naturally. So yeah, any last thoughts you want to share before we wrap up?

Robert Morgan

Yeah, I'd like to say something. interagency collaboration is more than just getting people together at a meeting. To be really effective, every member needs to know the roles and responsibilities of every other member so that there are no gaps or overlaps—so that things can really get done for the student in transition from school to adulthood. That's what really makes it work, I think, is when one can rely on another member of the group to carry out certain responsibilities and report back.

Matthew Wappett

Tabitha, do you have any last thoughts you want to share?

Tabitha Pacheco

My last thoughts would just be a sincere thank you to everyone who's doing this work—the teachers who have dedicated their professional life to helping these students be successful to the CRPS, voc rehab providers, the parents, the individuals doing the work—just a sincere thank you, because I know, it is a lot and it can be not only a drain on your time, but emotional investment in these students. Just thank you for everyone who's doing the work and continuing to want to be better and make these connections and provide opportunities for our students.

Matthew Wappett

Thank you both for your time today. This has been really insightful. It actually makes me want to do a special episode across a few articles where collaboration is a theme and kind of building on what you just ended with there, Bob, with the importance of setting rules and boundaries and responsibilities. Collaboration doesn't happen by accident. It has to be intentional. I think there's some really interesting themes and other areas to dig into here. So maybe we'll get in touch with you, and we'll have another panel here in a couple of months.

Thank you both for your time today. We really appreciate you sharing your insights and we appreciate you submitting to publish in the journal.

Thanks for listening to the author insights podcast today. We appreciate your support and your interest in our work. Again, as I mentioned earlier, please be sure to subscribe to our podcast feed on Apple Podcast, Spotify, Stitcher, Overcast Pod Bean, wherever you get your podcasts and please leave us a rating and a review and share this podcast with your friends and colleagues. That is how we get the word out and that is how we build our listenership is through your help and your willingness to kind of share this information.

You can learn more about the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal* at the DDNJ website, which is digitalcommons.usu.edu/ddnj/. As I mentioned earlier, you can download podcast transcripts in English and Spanish and learn more about our guests at the Institute for Disabilities website, which is idrpp.usu.edu. This podcast wouldn't happen without a whole host of people helping. This podcast is a production of the Utah State University Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice, Utah's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. This podcast is produced by Dr. Alex Schiwal, with transcript and translation support from Mary Ellen Heiner and Martha Reyes. Thanks again for listening. And in the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

Have a great day everybody.