
Evaluation at Grays at Harbor

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Abstract

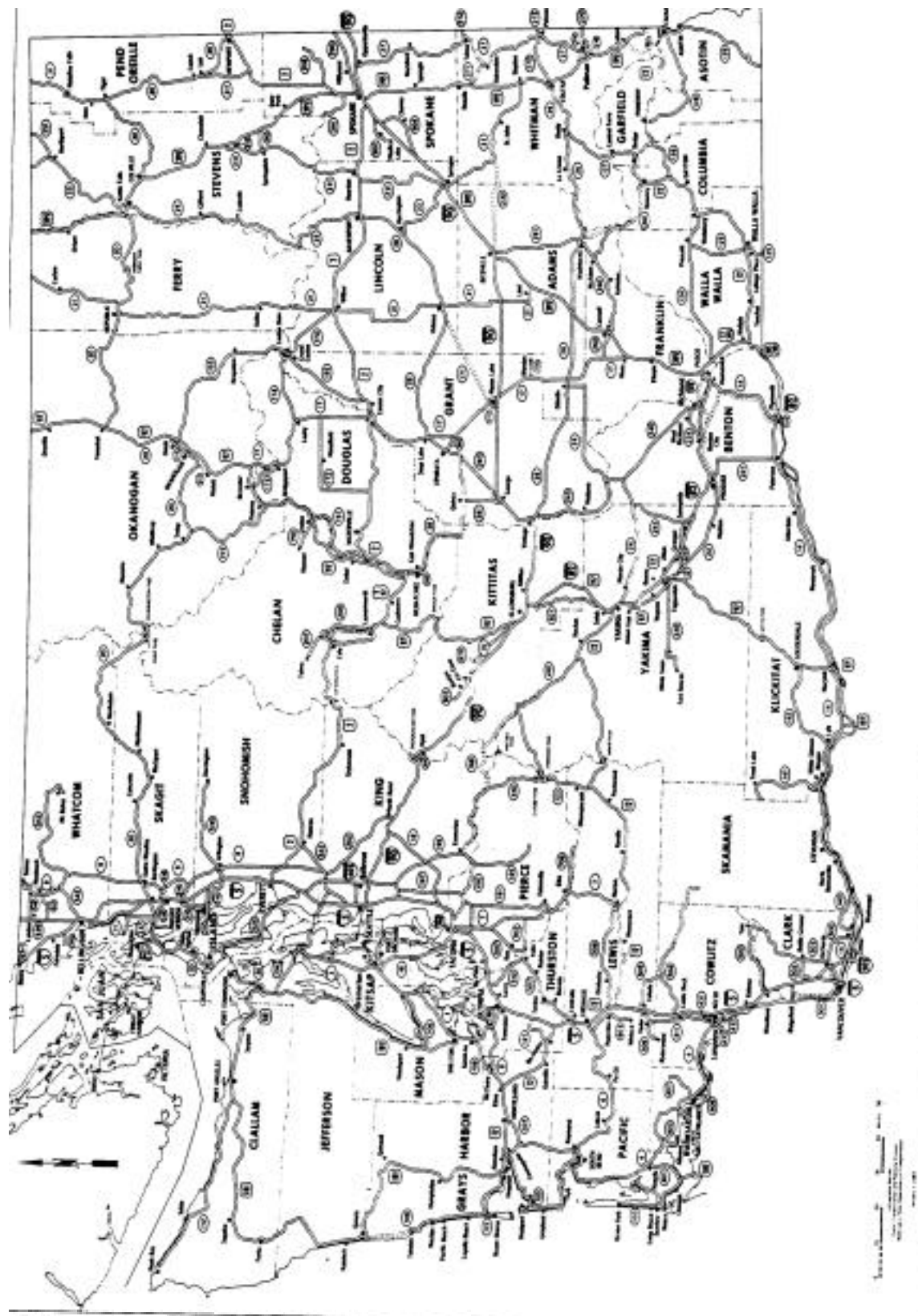
Using a case study research method, the process of program evaluation was studied. The context for the evaluation work was of a U. S. federally funded program aiding the transition of "learning disability" students from school to work. The purpose was to gain understanding of how evaluation designs could be made more relevant and realistic. Of particular interest were problems of working with project directors who over promise (and evaluators who oversimplify) what the program will accomplish. Also of concern were the different notions (criteria) of program success held by different people and the implication of what it means to be evaluated as a model program. Conflict between the formative and accountability roles of evaluation were recognized and the use of an external evaluator was closely examined.

Introduction

The Transition Project at Grays Harbor, Washington provided a special opportunity for studying the role of evaluation in the development of a model site for providing transitional services to youth with handicaps. The community was economically distressed; the institutional setting was complex. For recent graduates near the bottom of their class the employment picture was bleak. Educational, welfare, and job assistance agencies failed to reach many needing help.

Needed in Grays Harbor County was an initiative. It came in mid-1985 from an unusual source, a five-year-old for-profit service agency, Organizational Architects, Inc. Co-directors Mike Taylor of Westport and Carol Richardson of Olympia sought and obtained funding from the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) to develop a model transition program. They sought and obtained cooperation from a school district-based pupil services cooperative, the local community college, and an existing parents' support group. Together in a two-year period they identified 151 unemployed young adults, brought 35 to the college for courses, and saw 11 through to employment.

Federal funding carried with it an obligation for formal program evaluation. A vigorous critical analysis was promised by program personnel. A highly respected specialist entered into contract to assist the effort. The evaluation circumstances were in many ways similar to those at a hundred other transition projects across the country, and similar to those of projects expected in the foreseeable future. In each case there is a commitment to evaluate, an effort to review procedures, and some kind of assessment of progress and impact.



And in almost all cases, efforts to evaluate fail to tell us much of what we want to know. Among the problems are: differences in federal and local expectations, lack of attention to contexts, and uncertainty about how flexible evaluation designs should be. This case study was undertaken to examine the role of evaluation in the conduct of such projects.

The Case Study

My study of evaluation roles and issues depended on a thorough understanding of the transition program at Grays Harbor. Throughout the 1986-87 school year, I examined the workings of the program, the setting, the network of individuals and agencies which created special transition services in this rural and coastal county. I start the case report by introducing personnel:

Tom Owens, evaluation specialist, Northwest Regional Educational Lab; Carol Richardson, co-director, Organizational Architects, Inc., Aberdeen, WA; Mike Taylor, co-director, Organizational Architects, Inc., Aberdeen, WA; John Harp, vocational instructor, Grays Harbor Transition project; Gene Shermer, Academic VP, Grays Harbor Community College; Joseph Malik, President, Grays Harbor Community College, Aberdeen, WA; Gary Higashi, Vocational Director, Learning Assistance Center, GHCC; Harry Carthum, Director, Grays Harbor Pupil Services Cooperative; Dave Sander, Grays Harbor Pupil Services Cooperative; Claudia Self, Grays Harbor Advocates (parents support group); Rosemary Polosaari, Grays Harbor Advocates (parents support group); Pat Mahalik, Transition Advocate, Grays Harbor Advocates Lee Busco, Youth Employment, Grays Harbor County; Ken Colburn, special education teacher, Amanda Park School; and other agency people, employers, work supervisors, and trainees - and Robert Stake, evaluation researcher, University of Illinois, because in gathering my data I too became a minor character in the happenings.

The Transition Program

Two people calling themselves Organizational Architects, Inc. designed and implemented a collaborative assistance "model" linking nine rural school districts, their pupil services cooperative, the state's Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and community-based organizations, with the community college and "private sector." The aim was to identify and meet personal and employment needs of area youth with mild handicaps (learning disabilities) who were out-of-school and ineligible for other aid.

Co-directors Richardson and Taylor sought out and talked to the youth referred to them, as many as they could find in the 1869 square-mile Olympic peninsula county. For basic skills training and workplace orientation they brought 25 to the Grays Harbor Community College campus just south of Aberdeen. As in most special education programs, males outnumbered females, in this group 19 to 6. The trainees ranged in age from 17 to 30. Ten had finished high school. One by one they left the Project, averaging a little less than four months of training and entry-level employment under supervision. When the Project officially terminated during the summer of 1987, six of these 25 were known to be not working, another six had dropped out of sight, and the remainder were employed in such work as lumbering, building maintenance, engine repair, institutional housekeeping, and clerking.

The Project brought vocational educator John Harp to campus to teach job preparation skills. He taught about choosing a job, applying for work, interviewing, and about relationships between employers and employees. He often elicited long discussions of problems such as observing petty theft by fellow employees. The students were enthused to be "college students." Harp gave less attention to a student's learning difficulties or weakness of social skills than most special educators would have.

Disagreement as to instructional strategy and the fact that more than a year passed before the first students were brought to campus contributed to rather lukewarm participation by the Pupil Services

Cooperative and thus, by the local schools. In contrast, though slow to emerge, an enthusiastic parent group calling themselves the Grays Harbor Advocates provided hundreds of hours of community contact with students and parents. Response to the transition services from Community College administrators was mixed, some noting reluctance of their supporters to welcome students with learning disabilities to campus. Still, they provided one of the instructional strategies and, ultimately, an institutional home for courses.

The Grays Harbor Transition Project was funded by the federal government for a two-year period in the amount of \$140,000 to create a model transition service. Announcements in the *Federal Register* had encouraged proposals from private sector, for profit, entrepreneurs. One question to be evaluated was whether or not such a company as Organizational Architects, Inc. could improve upon ordinary arrangements in the difficult job of coordinating public institutions and volunteers trying to help school leavers with handicaps.

The Setting

Through the eyes of participating trainees the program consisted of two or three people and a couple of classrooms in the vocational wing at Grays Harbor Community College. A mile south of the bridge leaving the Aberdeen business district, further still from the wood-loading docks at Hoquiam, the college nestles in an evergreen hillside. Students here are the Grays Harbor "Chokers," a choker being one who locks the chain around a load of timber. A Bunyonic lumberjack marks the entry. Not much else about the College beckons youngsters having marginal experience in high school. Faculty members and administrators are proud of the College's academic program.

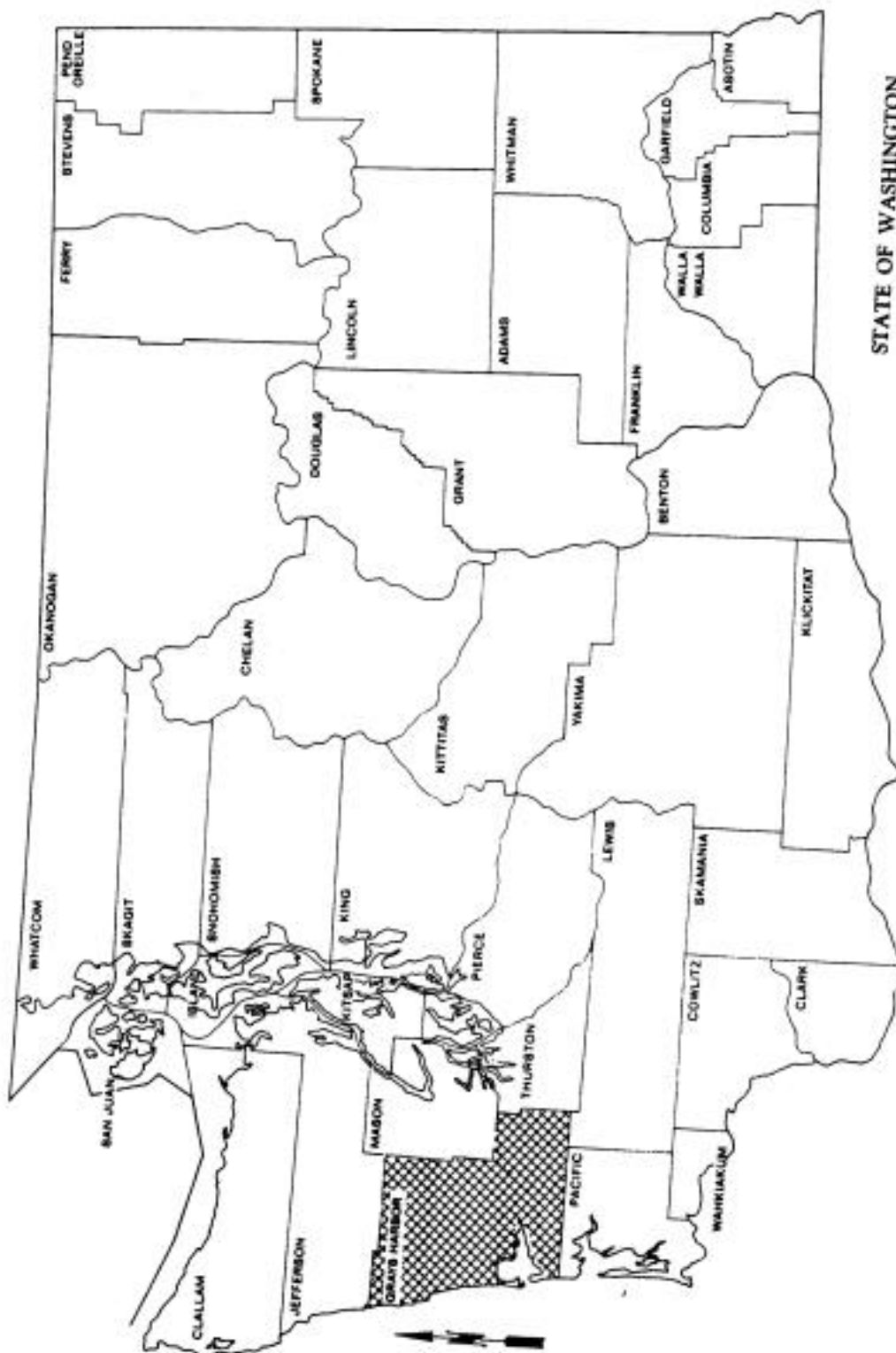
Most folks in this vast mountain, coastline, rain-forest county live around the pie-shaped harbor (see map, following page), though few are close enough to see the gray whales frequenting its mouth. At the Westport lookout station, tourists count whale watching and great expanses of beach among the pleasures. The mountains hide the villages, Quinault, Grisdale, Artic, Montesano has the court house and a delicatessen much to my liking. A second pie-shaped wedge, the Quinault Indian Reservation, presses inland from Queets and Taholah. Running north and south, US 101 cuts the county quietly; US 12 runs east and west, more like slash and burn.

Aberdeen and Hoquiam are union towns. Still, more of the county's trees are cut and hauled by independent rigs than by Weyerhaeuser. For would-be workers, knowing someone somewhere is important. The project staff seemed to know the people and the territory. In the eyes of a trainee, the transition staff people came by car or called by phone. They knew the boss or supervisor, often spent a while chatting about recurrent mists, 10% unemployment, or the grocery-worker strike.

It's a rural place. The sea is near, but people live close to the land. The work ethic is strong. Many young people leave home reluctantly. Even to take a job in the next town is a major decision, especially for a daughter. The welfare roll is long. Whether or not a youngster's job will cost more in welfare deduction than it brings in is an issue parents debate.

Program Activities and Alliances

What I describe here happened within the second year of the project, ending July 1987. Young adults no longer in school and showing signs of mild intellectual handicap and needing employment were identified. From high school records and through the grapevine the list grew, ultimately reaching 151. The College, the parents' group, and the Pupil Services Cooperative, all made referrals. Advocates Claudia Self and Rosemary Polosaari, themselves parents of special education children, tracked down many of the youth and brought their records up to date.



According to the evaluator's report, contact was made and initial information obtained on 103. Educational skills were tested and work experience discussed. About a third were referred to agencies such as Timberline Opportunities, a sheltered workshop. Eligibility requirements were not strict.

Most had been identified in school as special education students, but not all. One, for example, had a brain injury after leaving school. If talk with the young adult confirmed an interest in further preparation and suitability for entry-level vocational work, in they came.

Their interests and self-esteem were explored. One girl wanted to sell women's wear, but only the fashionable. A young man already knew small engine repair, but hesitated to expose himself to an employer's expectations. Some expressed reluctance to leave home. Some had unrealistic ideas about careers and educational opportunities.

With assistance from the Project, all enrolled in basic skills (reading and math) courses offered by the College. Additionally, in groups of eight or ten they learned about characteristics of employment generally and about specific employment conditions there in the county. John Harp's instruction was group-organized, casual, based on vocational materials he had developed earlier. His approach was personalistic, contrasting with the behavior analytic "cooperative education" approach vigorously advocated by Gary Higashi, vocational coordinator at the College. Little instructional collaboration between Harp and Higashi occurred, but perhaps little was needed.

After a slow beginning, collaboration at administrative levels did occur. The College, the Advocates, and the Cooperative participated in policy, tactical, and information-sharing meetings. Assistance of the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Labor and Industry (L&I) office was obtained. Even at the end, full-blown cooperation from any of the participating agencies could not be taken for granted. For them, of course, transition goals lacked priority and were not always pursued as *they* would have pursued them. But after extensive effort, individuals within the agencies were helping out. In the evaluation report John Hart was quoted as saying,

In the past DVR wouldn't work with the Community college. State agencies satisfy their needs in their own formal way, i.e., paperwork. Now they are doing very well, in fact, tremendous.

The Pacific Mountain Private Industry Council provided JTPA (Federal) funds which enabled new employees to work for a month at no cost to the employer. This was a key matter in getting actual work experience for the students. And it occasionally resulted in a regular job.

Each employer agreed to identify a person to supervise each trainee. Time and work evaluation sheets such as the one on the following page were kept. This sheet (an elaboration of a form suggested by the project evaluator) is for a student who did maintenance work at a retail outlet during the first two weeks of January. He accrued 16.5 hours and was paid \$55.27. A copy of his bank deposit slip also was kept in project files. He continued to work at least four additional weeks. Students could remain with the program as long as they liked. They could request additional work try-outs. Several remained in the program for more than 7 months. Most stayed about three.

Project co-directors Richardson and Taylor spent their time, half-time each officially, facilitating the collaboration. Carol handled more of the central office function, Mike the face-to-face contacts with employers, supervisors, and trainees at work. During the final 10 months of the project, evaluator Tom Owens identified almost 500 institutional contacts.

A special education transition program on campus runs into strong commitments to lecture-hall type instruction. John Hart said, "Many on campus were uninformed about learning disabilities." A key event occurred in January of that second year. Chatting about the upcoming Superbowl, Hart and his students made a lunch bet. Hart lost, and ingeniously invited College President Joseph Malik, DVR and L&I administrators, and several other agency people to join them. Lunch lasted several hours. The administrators appeared to move toward advocacy; the students

appeared to regard themselves with greater respect. It seemed at the time a turning point. But a second event may have nullified the first. In late spring a trainee was accused of stealing at the worksite. Enthusiasm lost something of its edge.

By late spring (1987) the Project was nearing its end. As intended, plans were debated for transferring coordinating responsibility to one of the existing agencies. College authorities seemed reluctant to continue services to this "special population." As he described the College to me, Vice President Gene Shermer indicated that vocational courses had only recently become 30% of the offerings. As to students with handicaps he said, "We are novices in this." He seemed favorably disposed to the work of the Transition Project, and by May seemed ready to assume responsibility for its instructional activity. But it did not happen. Discontinuation was not discussed with Richardson, Taylor, or Harp. John Harp was hired by the College as Developmental instructor, but no further transition courses were offered. According to Harp, on his own he reworked his activity packet for enhancing job-readiness skills and these were made available to students for self-study by Pat Majalik of the Advocates group. JTPA funding for entry-level employment support continued to be available through Lee Busco of Youth Employment-- as it was during the two years the Project operated.

Earlier, with a few months to go, wanting to continue and needing funds but cognizant of OSERS policy against post-project continuation funding, the co-directors submitted an application to "start" another OSERS project locally. (Originally the co-directors had wanted funding for three years but got it for two.) The new proposal was not funded. Formal evaluation of the initial project had not been completed, so an evaluation report did not figure in the competitive review.

This transition project had been funded to be a model project. It was not unusual for Mike Taylor to speak about the importance of keeping records of issues and problem-solving efforts so that educators elsewhere (the allusion usually to a rural site, once he said, "down in Tuscaloosa, Oklahoma") could be guided by the difficulties and successes of this project. Mike savored the idea of writing up the project's "life story." With Richardson and with us visiting evaluation specialists, he discussed issues and efforts--but as of this writing, 4 months after project termination, the logbook, the diary, the essays, had not appeared. A final report was "on the way," but it seemed unlikely that it would greatly facilitate generalization. The key thing is that seldom did the staff examine situations in a way directly leading to an understanding of what was particular to this Grays Harbor venture and what might generalize to many settings. Right or wrong, the staff felt that the Grays Harbor Transition Project would be most valuable as a model if it succeeded, and everyone dwelt far more on making it a success for a local constituency than on making it a learning model for a national constituency.

Time and Work Evaluation Sheet

	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THUR.	FRI.	TOTAL
DATE	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/6	1/7	1/8	1/9	1/10	1/11	1/12	1/13	1/14	1/15	1/16	
HOURS	8	0	8	15	3	0	8	0	8	8	3	3	3	3	16.5

TRAINEE'S PROGRESS SUMMARY: [redacted] must learn to be more serious while on the job. He has a tendency to take at the wrong times. He is a good worker and understands his supervisors' direction with only one exception. He does stay on task until job is completed. He is thorough.

I certify that the hours reported above were spent in direct trainee/trainor relationship, and that the salary/wages paid for this period are correctly stated herein. All legal requirements have been fulfilled.

[Signature]
SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR/COORDINATOR

[redacted]
TRAINING OR RELEASE

Project Evaluation

In the original Organizational Architects, Inc. proposal, Richardson and Taylor included an extensive plan to evaluate the process and product of transition service in Grays Harbor County. I photo-reduced that two- page section of the proposal and include it here. Whether or not their fulsome promise to validate their model was serious, realistic, and optimally suited to the Project is a key issue of this evaluation case study.

Among institutional resources identified at the end of the proposal is the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory of Portland, Oregon. The authors stated that the Lab's "expertise will be utilized to develop appropriate evaluation instruments and an on-going evaluation mechanism which will allow for changes during program implementation." Working on employability of disadvantaged youth, the two co-proposers previously had had a productive relationship with Tom Owens of the Lab and looked forward to his help again. (Harry Carthum had taken steps to bring in a University of Washington evaluation specialist, but Owens was the Richardson- Taylor choice.) Owens clearly had the expertise cited above, a predilection for good instrumentation plus cautiousness about overly-fixed designs. A flexible design allows attention to new issues and understandings as they appear. In March, Owens spoke to me of his frame of reference.

I've been doing [federally funded) case studies with problems pertinent to those of youth in Grays Harbor County, especially reflecting the economically troubled fishing and timber business there. Vocational education, special education, basic skills --the evaluation studies overlap. You get maximum mileage for the evaluation dollar by doubling up in this way.

Although the Project's federal contract was signed in October of 1985, its evaluation subcontract was not signed until August of 1986. Owens provided reports on the following 1986-87 schedule:

Sep 30	Evaluation Progress Report
Oct 15	Evaluation Instruments Package
Nov 13	Evaluation Instruments Package (Revised)
Feb 20	Evaluation Progress Report
Aug 30	End-of-Year Evaluation Report

Richardson and Taylor wanted Owens as their evaluator partly because they knew he would help them think through their operations. They knew he would not be impersonal and excessively objective in serving as outside assessor of project quality. They wanted an evaluator who measured accomplishment of both staff and students, but not one who attended exclusively to quantitative data. They expected technical assistance from him. Owens had impressed them as knowledgeable and informative about research on vocational education for special populations. They looked to him as management consultant as much as program evaluator.

Although its federally funded Transition Institute provided technical assistance on evaluation and other matters, OSERS had expressed no objection to having evaluation specialists provide technical assistance as well as summative evaluations to individual projects. Taylor invited Owens to the Annual Meeting (of transition project directors) in Washington, D.C. to assure that the Grays Harbor project evaluation would be "in compliance" federally as well as useful locally.

Owens said, "They were quite open, letting me choose the design and instrumentation most appropriate." He recognized that Carol and Mike needed more evaluation than OSERS required. He told me,

They planned to get JTPA funding too so I was interested in documenting student impact as well as possible. I could have "gotten by" with a more streamlined approach. Federal requirements were relatively minimal. At the Annual Meeting they had a whole bunch of questions to be covered in the final report. I had already drafted the evaluation plan but I went back and revised it to make sure the instrumentation was comprehensive enough.

Owens called for the following management-information records:

1. Learning contract (for individual trainee at worksite),
2. Timesheet (for individual trainee at worksite),
3. Counseling notes (for observations of work arrangement),
4. Employer evaluation (of the Transition Project),
5. Work performance evaluation (for individual trainee at worksite),
6. Applicant information sheet (for individual trainee to fill in),
7. Student data card (for staff to keep),
8. Individual training plan,
9. Program completers survey,
10. Log of contacts with agencies and individuals--

and, deleting his earlier recommendation of the ETS Youth Career Development Test, he identified the following evaluation instruments and data sources:

1. Referral correspondence,
2. High School and Beyond and other research literature,
3. Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Essential Skills results,
4. CTB/McGraw Hill Test of Adult Basic Education,
5. Interviews by the external evaluator,
6. Trainee writing assignments,
7. Washington Occupational Interest Survey,
8. General Aptitude Test Battery.

The 11-month evaluation contract was budgeted at \$5,000. During the period, Owens visited the site four times. Relationships between parties remained cordial throughout the period. Owens depended on the Project staff to keep records and administer the tests needed. His final report was based considerably on his earlier progress reports. Its preparation was delayed by late returns of trainee activity.

In his first evaluation progress report Owens described his September site visit. Citing Dave Sander of the Pupil Services Cooperative, he described the Project's special population:

The 9 high schools in the area graduate about 30-50 resource students a year, of whom about half don't fit into employment. They are not low enough to be considered developmentally disabled but not high enough to qualify for some other programs. Most of the youth who will be in this program are specific learning disabled --way below grade level in math and reading, some social behavioral problems, a few mildly retarded, none are physically handicapped alone, low socio-economic status, some drug problems, and disfunctional families. These youth usually had one to four periods a day in resource classes, several periods in a regular class, and some went to work-study. Small businesses are usually unwilling to take on these youngsters [even] with JTPA help. The youth need a person with whom they can identify.

Owens also wrote of the Community College situation, where no-cost adult basic education was offered to all with a high school diploma, which many of these trainees had. A number of the referrals to the Transition Project were from the College itself. The College had no staff members trained in special education.

For his part, Owens indicated an optimism in working at the site. With eyes sparkling, he cited staff criteria for success of the Project, including: "change in student self-concept, independence (ability to Handle oneself), and the number who enter employment or further training." In his February progress report Owens summarized major evaluation-related events and noted that the instrument package data were being collected by John Harp on all students. During his February site visit, Owens chose a student situation to inquire into and wrote the following:

The student interviewed began the program in November, 1986. His father asked the community college about classes for the son who has a reading disability. The student is interested in automotive repair and wanted to learn to do job interviews better. Although he had learned job interviewing techniques while in a high school career class, that occurred in his freshman year and was in a large class then. Through the Transition Project he is learning it better, in a smaller class setting, and the interviews with employers are videotaped and evaluated later. He had previous mechanic experience working for his father in a family -owned motorcycle business but is now working 25 hours a week through the project in car and diesel mechanics. He has a chance to do everything from tune-ups to major overhaul because the shop is small with only 3 employees. He will receive JPTA money for 250 hours of training and hopes to get permanent employment there after that. Although most students in the program take a bus, this student has his own car, which he uses to get to work and school. He likes the small size of the program and is making personal friends with whom he socializes on weekends. He is also learning from watching others in the program and he now helps other students to use the computer to prepare a resume. The things he likes best about the program are the chance to get a job and the instructor's help in developing his job interviewing skills. A concern he has about the program is that some of his friends in it, he feels, are ready for job placement but the instructor is overloaded with work and hasn't time to place some of the students yet.

Other aspects of the project also appeared vibrant and on-target in Owens' February progress report. I will describe Owens' final report later in the section titled "Evaluation as Technical Assistance." In the remainder of this section I wish to point out and comment on evaluative judgments in Owens' final report. It included evaluative comments from John Harp, some employers, and a few students, but almost nothing summarizing perceptions of quality as seen by Tom Owens himself, the evaluator. The following were the exceptions:

Establishment of close working relationships among the various agencies serving special needs youth was a major objective of the project and one where the co-directors at Organizational Architects, Inc., did an excellent job. I attended several of the interagency monthly meetings and found them to be well organized and useful. The monthly agency contact logs kept by the project staff indicate particularly frequent contact with the Grays Harbor Pupil Service Coop, the Advocates, and with cooperating employers. Also, monthly contacts were made with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Labor and Industries, the local high schools, and parents of students. Early referrals of youth while still in high school was one area that did not get adequately developed in the project.

Collaboration [with the private sector] was excellent. The project had training slots it couldn't fill. This is especially surprising in a community with high unemployment...

[As to making] the project to be fully transitional, it needs to identify and select handicapped students needing employment assistance while they are still in high school.

The scarcity of evaluative statements was attributable, I think, to the fact that Owens got fewer data on the late spring students than he wanted, and saw interest in the Project waning. Perhaps he no longer felt fully inclined to close out the study with summary statements of effectiveness and impact.

In interviews with me he was rather expansive and in general favorably impressed. Here are some of those judgmental observations:

... The types of jobs they are getting for the people seem really good to me. These are not "dead end" jobs. When you deal with special needs populations it's a challenge to get them jobs having real potential.

... The proposal called for them to be working very closely with school districts, to have contact with student even at 9th and 10th grade levels so there would be continuity in transition into this program. That seems to have fallen by the wayside. It is not getting much attention at all.

...If the Community College would pick up John Harp's part of the program there is good possibility you could divide the rest of the program among the institutions now participating. They could keep the thing going. There could be life after federal funding. If anyone could do it well it would be Mike and Carol. They have the vision. They can pull together things like that.

...I don't see them interested in generalizability. If they get a new project funded, which is equivalent to the continuation of this one, then they would be interested in it...

Owens was sensitive to a number of the major evaluative issues identified in the next section, but chose not to report on them formally. For one reason, his data pool was shallow. And issue development was not required by his formal contract, nor paid for. He did not orient as much to the vitality and generalizability of the enterprise as an outsider would expect. His orientation was local, his information was gathered to assist Taylor and Richardson. In the long and short of it, his was a project-based study, not a federal-program-based study - though he was careful to equip the Project to satisfy its federal requirements.

The project evaluation methodology consists of an on-going process that includes the following components.

Evaluation of the project (model) and their procedures. The effectiveness of the model will be evaluated in regard to the strategies utilized as well as the outcomes of the project.

Documentation will be utilized as a quantitative procedure to describe specifically what has occurred during the life of the project. The documentation will consider such items as appropriate individual record, organization of records, numbers of individuals in a program, consideration of staff, various meetings, use of the advisory board, exchange of information between various agencies, etc. This will result in a project being measured against the expected outcomes as designed in the project.

The evaluation will also determine the impact of the project. The evaluation will study the results of the strategies utilized in the project in relationship to the previous status of the handicapped individuals. Questions to address the impact may be: Were more students placed into some kind of a training program? Was job training improved? Were more options and alternatives found for the handicapped individual? Were more students involved in transition planning? Did the educational curriculum adapt and become more responsive to post-school needs at the community college level? Were difficult clients dealt with, followed-up and helped? Did more joint planning and cooperative techniques occur between the local education agencies, DDB, DVA, and community based organizations? Did the private sector businesses become involved in the training of handicapped individuals? Were parents affected in a constructive positive fashion? The impact will also be measured against the goals and objectives of the project. And the final impact may be measured in the accomplishment of individual goals and objectives as designed in each of the individual's individual training plan.

Another evaluation component will be that of the effectiveness of procedures utilized between the various agencies involved. Therefore, all procedures will be evaluated to see how well they were accepted and utilized. Staff satisfaction will be addressed as well as the leadership satisfaction. Of primary concern will be the satisfaction of the parents involved. As parents' satisfaction increases, so will parent participation increase. Another primary area in terms of satisfaction will be the use of the private sector businesses. Here again, were the businesses satisfied with the individual and are the businesses willing to continue providing support in terms of training and employment of handicapped individuals?

The students' progress will also be evaluated. The effect on the students who are involved will be evaluated via the individualized Training Plan evaluation component. The 177

development will include staff from the local education agencies, the community based organization, and the local community college. This team will be responsible for the objectives and plans necessary for the transition of an individual student from special education placement into post-school job or training following graduation. All files of those who enter the program will be reviewed. In addition, a special review of special education graduates files will be conducted to determine the appropriateness of placement into the program.

The tracking system of all individuals who have gone through the program will also be evaluated. The evaluation will consider the data that has been kept and utilized to potentially evaluate and modify the project's curriculum, alter and expand existing post-school opportunities and to further develop the transition procedures for placing handicapped individuals in the most appropriate and beneficial post-school program.

The project management team will be evaluated, too. This evaluation may include methodology for reports and record exchanges, communication, satisfaction of participating agencies and the overall effectiveness of the management team.

The final portion of the evaluation will consider the model and its ease to be replicated in other areas of the state and nation. The evaluation will focus on the following areas. Are the model objectives general enough for other community members to use as a guide? Can they adopt the strategies to their own situations so that the objectives are satisfied? Are the procedures written with consideration for the wide variance of job opportunities in each area? Are there enough local resources to be able to implement the strategies? Is the model flexible enough to account for varying values, population, needs, and a physical layout of a community? The final area in terms of evaluating a model and its ability to be replicated elsewhere will be considerations centered around cost. Is the model truly cost-effective?

Because the evaluation will be an on-going process the evaluation team will meet quarterly with the project team. These "in-service conferences" will be employed for support, project modification, and potential conflict resolution and project guidance.

There will be three personal strategies utilized in the project evaluation. These strategies will be (1) interviews with the project coordinators and management, (2) on-site interviews in two school districts in the special education consortium and (3) a variety of questionnaire surveys of the remaining special education consortium districts, and all staff. Each strategy will be used to confirm the findings from the other two and the findings will comprise the final report.

Research on Evaluation

During the fall of 1986, with help from my Transition Institute colleague, Lizanne DeStefano, I selected the Grays Harbor Transition Project as a case study for examining several key evaluation issues. We reviewed 140 proposals and selected three sites, the others at Danville, IL and Santa Barbara, CA. The Illinois and California sites were chosen partly for researcher ease-of-access.

Projects to be studied were selected that

- a. had immediate contact with students;
- b. utilized a variety of community work placements; and
- c. involved schools, state agencies, community, and private sectors; but as a group gave us
- d. geographical spread;
- e. experience with a variety of handicap conditions; and
- f. a variety of contextual issues.

In selecting each of the cases we kept in mind a number of issues our team identified last year as needing study. (See *Issues in Research on Evaluation in Transition* which I edited for the University of Illinois Transition Institute). These issues are identified in the next section. The Grays Harbor Project was attractive because it brought in (1) private sector coordinators who were not previously experienced in special education; (2) an economically depressed community with high unemployment; and (3) an outside evaluator whose previous work was known to be of high quality.

At the November 1986 Annual Meeting I approached Taylor and Owens and found them willing to consider participation in the case study. Knowing that progress in the Grays Harbor Project had been disappointingly slow, Mike Taylor was reluctant to increase its complexity, but he foresaw that my case study might facilitate documenting the project for distant readers. The arrangement was confirmed later after I spelled out my needs and Taylor and Owens had had a chance to discuss it with Carol Richardson. I pointed out that I did not intend to evaluate the Project and that I would be more attentive to its evaluation activity than to its transition activity.

I visited the Grays Harbor area for several days in March. I observed John Harp's class and an interagency meeting, met several of the students, visited several worksites and talked with supervisors, and interviewed administrators at the Cooperative, the Community College, and a rural school. I discussed the effort and the issues at length with Richardson and Taylor and separately with Owens. In August, after Project completion, I returned, intending to learn of reactions to the final report, but found it only in draft form and not yet seen by interested parties in the county. I interviewed Richardson, Taylor, and Owens about project termination and College plans to continue the transition services.

Not a special education researcher, I was unfamiliar with some of the program issues. I identified what I considered to be key programmatic problems, but concentrated on what I considered to be key evaluation problems. I frequently relied on Owens, the project co-directors, and DeStefano to correct my interpretations of the transition effort. Some misperceptions probably remain in this account. Even though the primary purpose here was to increase understanding of the role of program evaluation with transition projects, a correct and thorough understanding of the program was needed. The program issues I conceptualized are presented in the sections to follow, after a discussion of the evaluation issues.

The Issues

Many who study quality in education find it useful to distinguish between program issues and evaluation issues. Issues are major ideas about which people disagree. People will disagree about how the program is operating and how it should be evaluated. The co-directors of the Grays Harbor Transition Program and their outside evaluator identified both kinds of issues. In my case study here I was trying to examine evaluation issues, so I will take them up first.

Evaluation Issues

What questions will best organize our thinking and lead to greater understanding of the role of evaluation at the Grays Harbor site? Four major clusters of questions became prominent. After presenting these issue questions I will discuss each cluster with detailed reference to evaluating the transition work at this site.

- I. *Overpromising.* What is a reasonable time period for building a base in the community and developing such a model? Unexpectedly slow progress in Grays Harbor early on was voiced as one reason for less than full interagency cooperation later. Should disappointing accomplishment the first year be chalked up to faulty operation or to excusable overoptimism? Is this an instance of the general tendency of those who request funding to make proposal claims and plans which overpromise what can be accomplished? Do the directors, sporting high ambition, direct work away from modest accomplishment toward the unattainable?
- II. *Criteria of Success.* Should job placement be the primary criterion for program success? Is duration of employment just as important? At Grays Harbor we saw concentration on basic skills training, though the proposal emphasized employment criteria. On what standards should the evaluator focus? Do absolute standards (here, assurance of eighth grade skill levels) or relative standards (a gain for each trainee) serve quality control equally well?
- III. *Technical Assistance.* Did the external evaluator effectively balance evaluation as technical assistance and evaluation as guarantor of accountability? Did the assistance role nullify the obligation to identify shortcomings? Did the evaluator increase project dependence on outside help or assist the staff in becoming self-reliant? What is the proper role of evaluation reports in application for contribution or new federal funding of transition projects?
- IV. *Generalizability.* Did the Project co-directors use their opportunity well to create a model and leave a record potentially useful to other special education transition service personnel? The extensive evaluation commitments set forth in the Project proposal were far from fully covered in the evaluator's final report. The evaluator complied with the provisions of his contract. As of November 1, 1987, the Project staff had not submitted a report indicating--among many things--the generalizability of their approach, but continued to prepare one. Will that report serve the desire of OSERS to identify generalizable models?

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Other evaluators (or meta-evaluators) would of course have identified a different array of issues, at least in part. After reviewing our Transition Institute work of the first year, we selected this site and I traveled to Aberdeen expecting to investigate certain issues. Seven had been identified by our Institute Task Group and (as mentioned earlier) had been presented in our 1986 report, *Issues in Research on Evaluation in Transition*. The seven:

1. Discrepancies between federal expectations and local capabilities,
2. Special characteristics of "transition" that affect evaluation,
3. Inattention of evaluators to broad societal values,
4. Inattention to professional standards set forth by evaluators,
5. Inattention of evaluators to epistemic elements in evaluation,
6. Flexibility of evaluation designs, and
7. Regard of situational context in designing the evaluation.

Given our work the year before, the first three Grays Harbor evaluation issues - overpromising, criteria of success, and technical assistance – were perhaps predicted on discrepancies between the values and standards of various stakeholders, particularly federal sponsors and local agencies. The fourth issue, generalizability, included and extended our attention last year to situational context in the collection and analysis of evaluation data. More now on the four evaluation issues I studied at Grays Harbor.

Overpromising. As indicated earlier and as reproduced above, the proposal drafted by Richardson and Taylor to obtain OSERS funding promised extensive program evaluation and validation. Their transition services model was to be thoroughly examined and validated. And indeed, work was frequently and conscientiously reviewed by the co-directors and their collaborators, and by the outside evaluator as well. My own inquiry increased evaluative attentions by the staff and local sponsors. More than an ordinary self-scrutiny occurred. The proportionate share of total work spent in formal and informal evaluation was large.

And yet very little quality assurance or validation was documented. The promised "life story" of the Project has not, at least to date, been written. It would not stretch the truth to say that the impact of the project remained undocumented. If the comparison of alternative organizational strategies occurred (as promised in the proposal), the results were not made available to potential model-users. In the closing months major participants in Grays Harbor disagreed about the quality of the collaborative effort. Comments remained largely off the record, some too painful for public expression. Evidence that the model "worked" was not documented. It was not simply a failure to comply; the proposers promised much more evaluative assurance than their resources could have delivered.

The proposers promised to work with nine districts and 30 students. They did. The major goal of the program was to Develop a model that will provide effective -planning and program development to meet the service and employment needs of handicapped individuals as they leave school.

They did develop such a model. They did correctly see their task as one of model building. They recognized that the model needed validation, but did not assign or reserve resources for carrying out a validation study. According to Owens, in writing the proposal (and therefore in promising to validate the model) Taylor and Richardson were conceptualizing a three-year project. After receiving funding for two years, they could have indicated a reduction in the validation expectation--but did not. When I interviewed them with less than half a year to go, they appeared to feel that a smoothly running project transferred to ongoing institutional control would constitute a validation.

Almost a year and a half passed before the first students were being trained. Outside evaluator Tom Owens did not identify this as a failing, but Pupil Services Cooperative Director Harry Carthum did. Were the services tardy? Individual observers did not agree. Proposal timelines were not precise (and should not have been), but much emphasis within the proposal was given to the time-consuming business of validation. Proposal readers and evaluators could reasonably expect student enrollment during Year 1. Taylor was convinced that the pace of the Project was outside his control--they were pushing ahead in as many ways as they knew how. He felt they deserved credit for overcoming

enormous inertia. But overcoming inertia was not a federally recognized criterion of success. And the proposers had not indicated that building a base of agency cooperation would be difficult.

Criteria of Success. Richardson and Taylor based some of their thinking about validation on the fact that even for model-building projects, federal orientation to project success was directly keyed to job placement. They spoke of having their model win endorsement of the National Diffusion Network. They did not doubt that almost everything they did related to preparing youngsters for work, helping them get acquainted with work, and increasing likelihood they would remain at work. But the co-directors doubted that the quality of what they did in identifying needy youth, arranging agency cooperation, and helping youngsters deal with a panoply of obstacles would be highly correlated with percentage of youth placed. They had more than one objective to pursue.

We all know that many factors determine job placement. Taylor and Richardson knew they could be distracted from their service and educational obligations if they concentrated on placement. They recognized multiple criteria by which project success should be based--and resented the oversimplification of having any single indicator represent success. Job placement was seen to be not as important as federal rhetoric indicated. Overcoming inertia, for example, was also important. And reasonable people in different responsibilities disagree about how important each is.

Federal support was provided and received under a contract to produce a model service arrangement for handicapped youth. To be successful in federal eyes, to satisfy the contract, the Grays Harbor Transition Project needed to establish a smooth and durable collaboration among agencies, to place into employment a substantial number of youngsters, and to demonstrate that the arrangement would work elsewhere. Most of the time the Project staff was concentrating on more immediate goals.

For evaluation theorists the general question is one of honoring different, even sometimes contradictory, criteria and standards held by different constituencies. Here, the federal sponsor and the local operators had different views of how much should be accomplished. The proposal was a poor guide, it lacked specificity and credulity. As is the practice. Neither local nor federal people treat proposal statements as contractual. Hyperbole is expected. The document is intended to win funding, not to present realities, not to state a final set of expectations.

Most designers of evaluation models, working along such lines as the Joint Standards for Evaluating Programs, Materials and Instruction, propose ways of negotiating initial expectations. A few evaluators employ what Malcolm Parlett and David Hamilton called "progressive focussing" or emergent designs. Even with sophisticated designs, negotiated and emergent, the problems of conflicting criteria and standards do not go away. It could be that the present situation, one of taking specification within proposals and evaluation obligations only half seriously, is optimal. What is clearly needed is a better process for revising expectations along the way.

Evaluation as Technical Assistance. After a year of little progress, seeing little help from the University of Illinois Transition Institute, the Project co-directors chose to employ an external evaluation specialist.

They selected Tom Owens. They recognized they did not have the expertise themselves to carry out their validation commitments. They had promised validation because the RFP called for evaluation and because they believed a model should be validated. But the main reason they selected Owens was because they were confident he could help them carry out their immediate management responsibilities. Whether or not they objected to the evaluator Harry Carthum wanted did not become clear. They had worked with Owens previously and found him knowledgeable, ingenious, and easy to work with. From him they expected technical assistance.

In Owens's words, "Evaluation and technical assistance go hand in hand." He offered both. He recognized lack of expertise within Organizational Architects, Inc., but a willingness to learn. Far less than what was needed could be done. It was only a \$5,000 subcontract, so it was not highly important to the Northwest Lab, but it fit nicely into the Lab's and Owens's own service mission. Owens wanted to help. He wanted the Project to succeed, and he wanted to write a credible and useful evaluation report. He calculated that for \$5,000 he could commit perhaps 20 days of work, most at his office in Portland but perhaps four or five in Aberdeen. He could spend little time gathering data himself. He would rely mostly on the Project staff to obtain what he needed. He foresaw the paperwork; an evaluation plan, a progress report or two--each consuming perhaps a couple of days; and a final report, perhaps taking four. He would keep in touch by phone, analyze the data provided, and give Carol and Mike whatever advice he could.

Even though the co-directors knew they eventually needed "summative" data on outcomes, Owens's orientation and theirs was for "formative" evaluation. They wanted to be guided along the way by his observations. He provided a 63-page "instruments package" in mid-October, then revised it a month later. For his 14 evaluation questions Owens indicated the record forms and tested that could be used. Richardson and Taylor adopted many of the forms, but urged him to devote attention to development of the model, not just to measuring student readiness for employment. They pared down tile testing to "pre and post" administration of the Test of Adult Basic Skills.

Owens's final report was a 17-page single-spaced document. Designed around 12 of the 14 instrument-package questions, it provided a descriptive and interpretive overview of the project. He described interagency activity and participant characteristics, noting that participating students referred by the College had consistently lower basic skills gains than students referred by other agencies. The answers to the 12 questions were based largely on staff interviews made several months before project termination. The report was submitted several weeks after project termination. Taylor and Richardson gave it close attention, but others apparently did not see it.

What Owens provided through his evaluation subcontract was reasonable in three ways: the kind of help he provided, the amount of work he did, and his direct and indirect reflections on the merits of project accomplishment. He offered formative evaluation more than summative evaluation, helping the co-directors examine the issues they faced. Even though he produced little information and rather limited interpretation of data provided him, Owens devoted as much time and as much professional scrutiny as \$5,000 buys from the information services industry. He did not really provide an assessment of impact and worth of the transition services in Grays Harbor, nor of the quality of the model, but he made it possible for a careful reader to see difficulties faced and overcome and the extent to which local youth with handicaps were assisted in gaining employment. He provided pretty much what the staff needed and could pay for.

Owens fulfilled his contract. Together with Richardson and Taylor he defined his role more as technical consultant than accountability auditor to policy research. He served his immediate employers well. How well he served the Grays Harbor community and the American society is not clear. He did not study issues from the point of view of the collaborating agencies and institutions. Informally he shared his concern about issues most pertinent to American education and the workplace, issues raised in broad sweep by OSERS evaluation requirements. But he did not evaluate the Project in those terms. Whether he should have is not clear. Technical assistance may be the proper emphasis for such an evaluation subcontract. More study of what each of an evaluator's options accomplishes is needed.

Generalizability of Model Programs. Tom Owens did not provide what the original proposal called for in the way of validation of the transition model. No evaluator could have, whatever the subcontract size. For \$50,000 or \$100,000 Owens could have studied the validation issues raised and gathered pertinent data, but the degree to which this model would be appropriate for adoption across

the country still would not be known. That becomes known only when a model is tried out in a variety of circumstances under close watch. The reality even then is that local staff members will immediately adapt the model, influencing and extending it so that the original model survives only in part.

Long after the project terminated Mike Taylor talked about writing its story in a way that would be useful to others interested in the model. November arrived, the report was said to be nearly written. A good final report would be useful. But even if Taylor were to tell the story effectively, it would not, and could not, be a validation of the model for use elsewhere.

The Organizational Architects, Inc. people did not keep their proposal's promises to validate the model. A serious matter? Perhaps. The proposal becomes the legal contract and a basis for evaluating success, but does not reflect subsequent revision of purpose, schedule, and funding. It was unclear from this proposal whether validation was part of a two-year plan or three. Governments and other sponsors seem to have little way of dealing with unrealistic proposals. Here the promise was to provide understanding--and little (to date) has been provided. Apparently no one in Washington, D.C. was distraught because the Grays Harbor transition model and what had been learned disappeared in the mist.

Who is to blame? The work of the federal bureaucrat is to translate legislation into regulation and opportunity, to keep programs running, not to learn from them. Others are to learn, but who are they? We have clearing houses and research laboratories, repositories of learning. The records may get filed, but seldom retrieved. Neither theorists nor practitioners are avid gleaners of vicarious experience. Few believe the models created by federal services-delivery projects are worth examining. Some are, but almost no one can learn a small project's important complexities. The system for identifying which cases should be paid attention to is extremely weak. Professional expectation is low. If problems or effects can be aggregated, then the tally may be entered in some matrix. If a story can be promulgated simply, such as through the National Diffusion Network, then it may be. But the applied research system is not working. Still, many Mike Taylors are optimistic.

As things stand, the burden of learning belongs to the next generation of project directors. These persons too have little time to search for models. But more important, in these times they have little expectation of needing them or learning from them. The models that appeal to them are combinations of own experience and ingenuity. New directors occasionally will study what others have done, but somehow they know that for anyone to understand the nuances of a model in a way that will circumvent obstacle and increase success requires a worthy model in the first place and an expert record keeper.

Individual models will generalize some, but not as much as the name "model" suggests. How extensive the generalizability probably varies with many characteristics of professional staff, community, and student body. Often the most to be expected from an outstanding model is suggestion. How the evaluator should examine a model to determine its suggestive properties, its possible uses to diverse users, is not well understood.

In midspring, 1987, chatting in a conference room in Olympia, I asked Tom Owens a question, one I considered the \$64,000 question: "Does Grays Harbor really have a *model* program?" He said:

Well, it's a unique effort. It is business people getting a school district, a community college, and an advocacy group working together on transition. And it's doing it well now, working against barriers common in many communities. Using JTPA funding they have placed 13 students on jobs in the community and they hope to get another bunch working in April. But the real push is to keep the training [at the community

college] and support [from a parents' advocacy group] working, working hand in hand, after OSERS funding runs out.

Transition Project Issues

The Evaluator's Questions. The conceptual ground underlying Tom Owens's evaluation study was established by the questions he presented in the Instruments Package dated November 13, 1986. As I indicated earlier, the co-directors had called for an extensive evaluation and validation perspective. Owens outlined a modest package of observations and measurements. The facets of the Project which Owens felt important for immediate evaluation are illustrated by the following 14 (paraphrased) questions:

1. What major *past problems* have kept youth with handicaps from successful transition to employment and further education?
2. What are the *trainee characteristics* of the young people in this project?
3. How does the Project staff identify unique needs in each participant and develop an *individualized action plan*?
4. How did participants hear about the Project and what were their *reasons for joining*?
5. What *program strategies* are used to increase participants' basic skills and employment and training options?
6. Do students make a significant *gain in basic skills*?
7. Do students achieve adequate *employability skills*?
8. Are training and employment related to *study interests* and abilities?
9. Do students eventually make a positive *transition*?
10. How effective is the *interagency collaboration* in meeting the needs of participants?
11. What *attitudes toward the project* are held by participants, parents, employers, and staff?
12. How effective was the *private sector* involvement in the training and employment of individuals with handicaps?
13. In what ways can project *improvement* occur?
14. Was the Project's Transition Model developed suitably for *adoption and adaptation*?

Owens raised the basic questions expected by OSERS. He spoke of his own strong interest in issue questions #6, #10, and #12. As with most evaluators with psychology or special education backgrounds he was particularly interested in characteristics of the students. During the year he became attentive to several additional issues:

15. What is the quality of jobs they get?
16. From what referral sources do the good trainees come?
17. Which trainees gain most in basic skills?
18. How much communication is there among the agencies?

19. What are the pros and cons of a college as the training site?
20. What responsibility does the high school have during the year or so after the special education student leaves?

Though all 20 of Owens's questions are important, they did not direct attention to what turned out to be the shortfall in transition processes at Grays Harbor. The Project encountered serious difficulty with Interagency cooperation, with trainee misbehavior at work site, and with transfer of transition responsibilities to the agencies. Informally, the evaluator considered these matters but did not give focus to them nor speak of them in the formal evaluation report. Though chosen partly because of his flexibility, Tom Owens stuck to his original issues.

Program Issues Deserving Research. When the Grays Harbor Transition Project is looked at from a policy-research perspective, a set of issues somewhat different from Owens's set emerges. Entering with a frame of reference shaped by the Illinois Transition Institute's seven evaluation theory questions (described earlier in "Evaluation Issues"), I found the following program issues to be pertinent in the Grays Harbor Project.

1. Were relationships among participating agencies good? Was co-director confidence in these relationships misplaced? Was the Project less effective because the Pupil Services Cooperative prevented access to youngsters still in high school? Was there resentment against the large funding granted to a recently created for-profit agency? Did this agency effectively vanish, leaving a well-functioning program to be run by existing institutions?
2. Is the Project a redundancy, repeating services already provided by existing agencies? Is job preparation the key need of the targeted students? How much emphasis should be put on increasing students' ability to get their own jobs? To what extent is general vocational preparation useful to all? Do these young people need more of what can be offered by special education specialists?
3. Were the right students served? Were native Americans and certain others greatly in need of transition services those least likely to get help? In working primarily with referrals, was the Project helping only those easiest to help?
4. Did the co-directors work effectively at building a generalizable model? Was program generalizability diminished because employment placements relied heavily on a co-director's social network?
5. In lowering its entrance requirements and downscaling instructional offerings to serve these needy youngsters did the Community College in any way jeopardize the quality of its established offerings? Did the alliance help make the College less attractive to local youngsters than it had been and thwart community efforts to keep them at home?
6. Observed were a strike of grocery store workers, changes in state definitions of welfare, and other economic developments locally. Were these contextual factors needing programming attention by the Project?

As a researcher studying the evaluation work at Grays Harbor, I made a few tries to relate those six program issues to evaluation. Relationships among the participating agencies were typical, much like what we find in other communities. Any agency anywhere is busy, with little resource for doing more; is somewhat suspicious when a new program nudges into its territory; and is resentful of implications that existing services are not what they should be. Interagency facilitation deserved to be a major criterion of success. Here, special educators admired neither the Project's administrative prowess nor its training orientation and did not allow Project interaction with students still in high

school--yet special educator Dave Sander worked diligently to make the Project a success. The visitor here could still hear words of disbelief that Organizational Architects, Inc. was funded rather than existing agencies, more because of its lack of track record than because it represented the private sector.

In many eyes, the Project was a redundancy. Yet that was not an evaluation issue. Many local youth with handicaps were not being helped by existing agencies, and with a new nexus, additional youth were served. But many people supposed that had the money been available to existing agencies, the same or better services would have occurred. When the Project closed, the community college bowed out; also, an existing JTPA contractor continued to provide entry employment assistance. Many of the students had previously had years of basic skills remedial training and some job preparation. It remained unclear that a new institutional configuration was needed. Still, transition needs were real. Young people's attitudes toward training and employment do change, and a number of those served here appeared to make good use of the opportunity. With little arrangement for person-specific training before the trainee reached the worksite, the educational contribution here appeared modest, yet Project attention to youth needs appeared not redundant. All this deserved evaluator review.

The Project co-directors recognized their commitment to model building. To them that meant setting up the best interagency collaboration, providing the best training, and arranging good work opportunities--and then letting others know how the obstacles have been overcome. They did not approach the problem of learning what the limits of acceptance would be, under what conditions would something work or not work. Their choice was probably wise, for they had even less competence to validate their model than competence to create it. They built a workable model, of questionable durability, of unknown generalizability. As their evaluator pointed out, what they did well was to get several agencies to provide good transition services to youth who needed it. Should evaluation expect more?

Of the foregoing issues, how many should Tom Owens have addressed? It's a matter to be negotiated, but ultimately it is his choice to make. Beyond the routine how-much and how-often and how-good questions, the evaluation specialist faces a large choice of issue questions. Many issues must be ignored. Never is the evaluation complete. Evaluators have neither the time nor the talent to go beyond a modest inquiry. Some evaluators do not address any important issues. Owens did not violate the norm. He fulfilled his contract, working harder at helping the staff understand their situation than attesting to their accountability. Neither Richardson and Taylor's way nor Owens's way seems the way toward breakthroughs in transition services, but it was a way to serve needy young adults in a needy community.

What are reasonable expectations of evaluation? Not broad generalization about what works! As Lee Cronbach, Egon Guba, and Carol Weiss have concluded, DeStefano and I also have concluded that an aggregate of local project evaluations will neither determine the success of the national effort nor the reasons why what happened happened. Evaluation budgets are too small to support the best inquiry we could do, but even our best efforts seldom answer the most important questions. From project to project, dissimilarities among aims, tactics, and settings defy efforts to generalize. Other than contributing to the census of what has occurred when and where, federal questions are seldom answered by project-based evaluation. Such was the case in Grays Harbor.

Evaluation plays another role. Evaluation requirements tell professionals about the expectations of government agencies, and thus indirectly, the expectations of the people. For example, by emphasizing job placement criteria, an economic frame of reference is established. By requiring standardized data, the staff's self-serving anecdotes become less tenable. Obviously there are more direct ways of stating national goals and preferred styles, but the obligation to evaluate is one of the ordinary ways.

But the real service of formal evaluation requirements is in enhancing inquiry undertaken by local stakeholders, particularly the project staff. It appears that the more conscientious educators, those already busy reviewing project quality, are the ones who can be helped most. Whether long experienced in special education, as was Harry Carthum here, or little, as were, at the outset, Carol Richardson and Mike Taylor, directors find that good evaluation requirements prod and guide self-study. Yet requirements can be misdirecting and enervating. Specifying objectives, for example, is useful to a point, but a drain on work if always on the agenda and a straight jacket if overly heeded.

Whether stated in application procedures, provided through technical assistance, or generated by outside consultants, evaluation requirements can be powerful facilitators of good project management. Too little metaevaluation research has been done to demonstrate which kinds of requirements strengthen projects and which kinds weaken. In this project, evaluation requirements did not appear to contribute positively to the first year's organizational efforts. These did not facilitate interagency planning nor resolve differences in perspective of transition services needed. Could a different set of OSERS evaluation requirements done so?

When outside evaluator Tom Owens was brought in, he targeted formative aims more than summative. He (a) helped establish a management information system, and (b) moved toward the co-directors' dissemination aims (which ultimately were not pursued). His aims exceeded OSERS requirements, but fell short of "model" validation. Owens's interpretation of requirements facilitated getting ordinary work done and keeping records most likely to be needed. Informally he encouraged inquiry into fundamental transition issues, many of which Taylor and Richardson already were discussing. Owens could have done more, but what he did fit the size and content of his subcontract. Concentration on federal needs may someday enhance pursuit of fundamental generalizations. But we know not how.

Evaluation played both formal and informal roles in the Grays Harbor Transition Project. The formal requirements set up by the original RFP lacked specification but allowed essential local adaptations. The formal requirements set forth through technical assistance from the Transition Institute helped establish traditional management routines, orienting more to compliance than elucidation. Commitments to validation set forth in the Project proposal posed unrealistic obligations, but these were largely ignored by everyone. The outside evaluator set forth formal evaluation requirements which further operationalized management routines and informal evaluation requirements which supported thoughtful review of what was happening. All in all, a nice balance between asking too much and too little. Still, in its #1 aim, model building, the Project fell short of expectation. Better evaluation requirements possibly could have made a difference. Probably not, but possibly.