



# Transition Toolbox

Finding the right tool for every transition challenge along the way!

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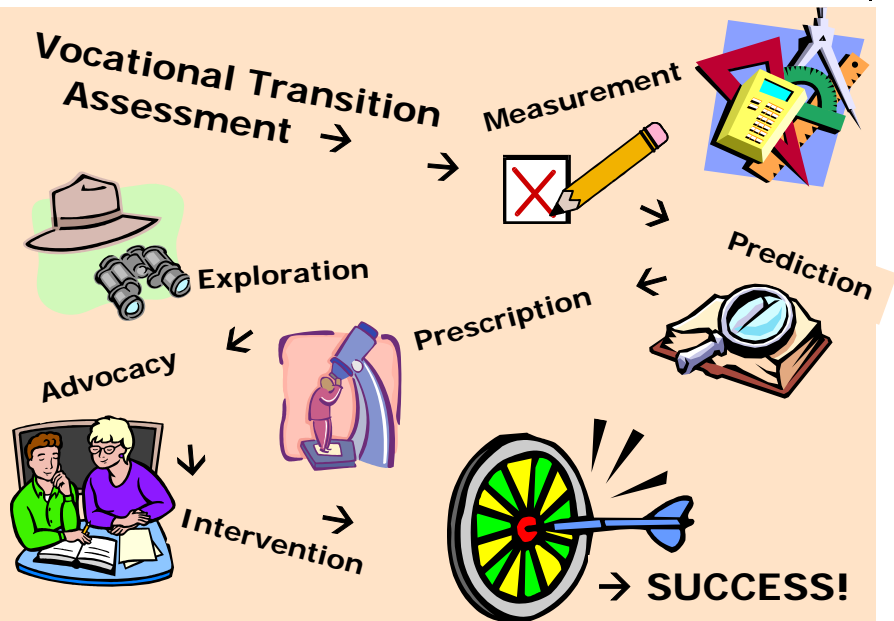
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The focus of this issue of the *Transition Toolbox* is Vocational Transition Assessment—its purpose, types, and uses, and the role of professionals in the vocational assessment process and resources for vocational assessment.

Assessment provides necessary and required information for effective transition planning. This is particularly true when it comes to assessing a student's vocational aptitude. One way to begin the process of vocational assessment is to put into context what is meant by assessment. An Operational Definition of Transition Assessment is:

*"Transition assessment is a planned, continuous process of obtaining, organizing, and using information to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages and their families in making all critical transitions in student's lives both successful and satisfying."* -Assessment for Transitions Planning (Clark, 1998)

# VOCATIONAL TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

The transition from school to work and/or community adult living can be difficult for all students—and uniquely so for those with disabilities. The tasks of choosing a job and preparing for work, deciding to go to college or trade school, deciding where to live and with whom and other areas of decision making present youth with disabilities the challenge of having to make complex decisions. Professionals can assist students in making these decisions by involving students in meaningful assessments that will assist in matching the students' abilities and preferences to appropriate academic, vocational and functional education programs.

One area of particular challenge to staff working with students with disabilities is assessing vocational skills and abilities. Obtaining meaningful employment is too important to leave to chance. It requires “thinking up front” to assist the student in being motivated to develop his or her potential and to view meaningful employment as a viable option for **ALL** students with disabilities.

## An Operational Definition of Transition Assessment

“Transition assessment is a planned, continuous process of obtaining, organizing, and using information to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages and their families in making all critical transitions in students' lives both successful and satisfying.”

—*Assessment for Transitions Planning (Clark, 1998)*

## Purpose of Transition Assessment

A clear understanding of the student's strengths and needs is critical to developing and implementing effective transition plans.

The purpose of transition assessment is to help Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams determine the appropriate courses of study and community/vocational experiences that the student will need to be successful in postschool goals. Whether a student is interested to pursue postsecondary education, trade school, employment (supported included) or other activities associated with adult living, assessments will provide valuable information about the student's abilities and deficits.

Transition assessment can assist teams to:

- Determine strengths, abilities, and deficits
- Identify interests and preferences
- Determine appropriate instructional settings
- Determine level of self-determination skills
- Determine necessary accommodations, supports, and services

## Vocational Assessment

“Vocational assessment is a systematic, ongoing process designed to help students and their parents, [and other adults involved in the transition process] understand a young person's vocational preferences and potential” (NICHY, 1990)—the primary purpose of which is to gather “employability” information about the student. The assessment process can include:

- Observations
- Anecdotal information
- On-the-job tryouts
- Classroom performance examples, tests
- Work samples
- Apprenticeships
- Paid work experiences
- Work student program

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These assessments provide valuable information about the student's interests, aptitudes, needs for accommodations/modifications, attitude toward work, work habits and behaviors, tolerance for work, and self-concept. And the assessment process provides a circle of feedback where the student learns about him/herself and the parents and professionals learn about the student.

The vocational assessment process can take place at different points in a student's life. However, IDEA '97 requires the IEP team to consider the vocational needs of all students and to address these needs in IEP development and implementation.

### Uses of Vocational Assessment Data

Category	Description
Determination of Career Development	To find out where the student stands in terms of: career awareness, orientation, exploration, preparation, placement, or growth/maintenance. Appropriate for middle school/early junior high and beyond (Neubeert, 1985).
Measurement	To identify abilities, interests, capabilities, strengths, needs, potentials, and behaviors within the areas of personal/social functional/academic, community/independent, employment and employability areas. Initial testing appropriate for middle school; more involved analyses appropriate for high school and beyond (Neubeert, 1985).
Prediction	To match an individual's interests and abilities with appropriate vocational training, community employment, or postsecondary training. Appropriate for high school (Neubeert, 1985).
Prescription	To identify strengths and needs, and to recommend types of adaptive techniques and/or remedial strategies that will lead to improved career development and vocational preparation. Appropriate for high school and young adults and beyond (Neubeert, 1985).
Exploration	To "try out" different work-related tasks or vocational activities and to determine how interests match abilities for vocational education programs, community jobs, postsecondary, or other adult activities. Appropriate for high school and young adults (Neubeert, 1985).
Intervention	To implement the techniques or remedial strategies that will help a student explore vocational or work options. Appropriate for high school and beyond (Leconte, 1986).
Advocacy	To develop a vocational profile to help students, their families, and others identify concrete ways to assist students in achieving their goals. Appropriate for high school and beyond (Leconte, 1986). <i>-NICHCY, Interstate Research Associates, Washington DC</i>

## Assessment Instruments for Transition Planning

The following list of resources is intended to provide a “starting point” for IEP teams to use when determining what type of vocational assessment tool to choose. (No endorsement of any instrument is intended or implied.)

### ***Arc's Self-Determination Scale***

The Arc of the United States  
500 E Border St, Suite 300  
Arlington TX 76010

### ***BRIGANCE***

Life Skills Inventory  
Curriculum Associates, Inc.  
PO Box 2001  
North Billerica MA 01862

### ***Enderle-Severson Transition Scales***

Practical Press  
PO Box 455  
Moorhead MN 56561

### ***Checklist of Adaptive Living Skills (CALs)***

Riverside Publishing Co.  
8420 Bryn Mawr Blvd  
Chicago IL 60631

### ***Functional Skills Assessment and Programming Catalog***

Milligan Catalogs  
11212 S Hawk Hwy  
Sandy UT 84094

### ***Inventory for Client and Agency Planning (ICAP)***

Riverside Publishing Co.  
8420 Bryn Mawr Blvd.  
Chicago IL 60631

### ***Life-Centered Career Education (LCCE) Knowledge and Performance Batteries***

Council for Exceptional Children  
1110 N Glebe Rd  
Arlington VA 22201-5704

### ***Self-Determination Knowledge Scale***

Wayne State University  
Office of the Dean  
441 Education Bldg.  
Detroit MI 48202

### ***Independent Living Behavior Checklist***

West Virginia Research and Training Ctr  
One Dunbar Plaza, Suite E  
Dunbar WV 25064

### ***Tests for Everyday Living***

CTB/McGraw-Hill  
20 Ryan Ranch Rd  
Monterey CA 93940

### ***Transition Behavior Scale***

Hawthorne Educational Services, Inc.  
PO Box 7570  
Columbia MO 65205

### ***Transition Planning Inventory***

PRO-ED, Inc.  
8700 Shoal Creek Blvd  
Austin TX 78757

### ***Transition Skills Inventory***

PRO-ED, Inc.  
8700 Shoal Creek Blvd  
Austin TX 78757

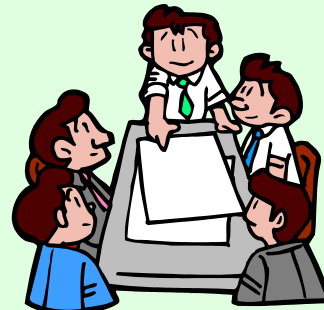
### ***Work Adjustment Rating Form***

Educational Testing Service  
Princeton NJ 08541

### ***Work Adjustment Scale***

Hawthorne Educational Services, Inc.  
PO Box 7570  
Columbia MO 65205

*Taken in part from Assessment for Transitions  
Planning, Clark, 1998, PRO-ED.*



## Professionals in the Vocational Assessment Process

It is important for professionals to collaborate in the assessment process. There are many professionals, with various areas of expertise, who can contribute at some level. These professionals may include:

- Parents
- Special education teacher
- Guidance counselors
- Vocational educators
- Vocational evaluators (also referred to as Vocational Assessment Specialists)
- Rehabilitation professionals
- School psychologists
- Social workers
- Employers



Each of these professionals will play a different role in the assessment process. For example:

**Special education teacher** - She/he will work closely with the student and family in identifying an individual's needs and areas of interest and in collaboration with the family and other IEP team members, and will work to develop IEP goals for the student. The special education teacher will likely be responsible for planning what vocational assessments are needed, and will collect information formally and anecdotally about the student's academic strengths, employability skills, interpersonal skills and other skills related to career awareness and aptitude.

**Guidance Counselor** – In some schools this is the person responsible for working with students to plan their future, including students with disabilities. A counselor may assist students by giving the assessment, or by helping students explore college/trade school or employment options through programs available on computer, e.g., Career Information Systems (CIS). The counselor may also be the case manager responsible for collecting and coordinating assessment information from teacher, parents and others.

**Vocational educators** – Vocational educators are those teachers who teach such classes as auto repair or data entry. They can assist by working with vocational evaluators, special education teachers and counselors to assess students in the vocational classroom or work site. They may also monitor student progress in vocational programs through curriculum-based vocational assessments.

**Vocational Evaluators/Vocational Assessment Specialists** – These are the professionals most likely to do vocational assessments of a student. They may also serve as consultants to others, or they may coordinate the assessment activities of others. These are professionals who frequently work within secondary or vocational school settings, within community-based programs, in industry, adult rehabilitative services, adult job training services, and community colleges or other postsecondary educational settings.

**Parents** – Parents play a vital role in assisting their students to achieve their desired postschool outcomes that include finding and maintaining employment. Parents are the foremost advocate and advisor for their student and they can provide valuable support and resources during the assessment process. Parents know their child! One simple example of how a parent can support the process is by providing transportation to a work site when other means of transportation are unavailable or limited.

## Transition Assessment Sources

The Individuals with Disability Education Act of 1997 (IDEA '97) permits all available evaluation data to be considered when determining assessment needs for eligibility and/or IEP development. Frequently standardized assessments are viewed as providing the more "valued" data for defining a student's strengths and deficits. However, other sources of assessment have relevance to the process and should be considered by the team in proportion to standardized assessments.

Some sources of non-standardized assessments include:

- Informal interviews with student and parents
- Vocational assessments
- Interest inventories
- Teacher observations
- Information from guidance counselors
- Formal assessments
- Previous IEP's and diagnostic summaries
- Permanent record



## Results of Student-Centered Assessments

Student-centered assessment assists teams to develop and implement quality transition programs and experiences. The results of student-centered assessment are:

- Individualized ongoing process for success
- Defines goals
- Drives curriculum and instruction
- Areas of assessments may include:
  - Work/job skills
  - Basic skills
  - Communication skills
  - Ability to follow directions
  - Personal hygiene and grooming
  - Ability to work with others
  - Work habits
  - Preferred learning style



All of this information can then inform and be articulated in the Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP) that is a required content area of the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP)

Oregon Administrative Rule 581-015-0068 states:

- (1) The individualized education program shall include:
  - (a) A statement of the child's present levels of educational performance, including how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

A good portion of the information contained in the PLEP is derived from the assessments given. The PLEP must include how the student is currently functioning and is based on information derived from assessments such as classroom tests and assignments, standardized tests, observations, feedback from parents, students, teachers, related service providers, outside agency participants and other involved parties. This statement must also include how the child's disability affects his or her ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum and how the disability affects the student's ability to learn.

A clear understanding of the student's present level of performance is critical to developing an effective

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special education program that includes the appropriate accommodations and modifications necessary for the student to learn. The PLEP should be consistent with the information derived from assessments conducted and/or observations made of the student.

### Conclusion

Early vocational skill building and ongoing vocational assessment can and will support students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. Vocational assessment can assist parents, professionals and the student to think strategically and plan thoughtfully and carefully about the future. ☺

## School-to-Work/Career Handbook

School-to-Work/Career was initiated in 1994 when the National School-to-Work Opportunities Act was signed into law. Originally the program was referred to as School-to-Work. Some districts in Oregon and Washington County have chosen to refer to the program as School-to-Career. The rationale for their choice is based on a community perception that School-to-Work refers to a program that relates only to students not planning to pursue post-secondary education.

The School-to-Work/Career program consists of school-based learning, work-based learning, and activities connecting the two. The internships and some of the other STW/C activities have long been a part of professional/technical (vocational) education. [STW/C Handbook](#)

## NETCAST

sponsored by the Department of Education/Office of Special Education  
and the Department of Human Services through a grant from the  
Rehabilitation Services Administration

The fifth NetCast transition broadcast—Self-Determination: Supporting Students to Become Self-Advocates—is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2003. Broadcast time is 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., with set up and sign in beginning at 3:30 p.m. at the viewing sites listed on the DHS registration page. The four previous sessions were well received and informative, with participants from across the state.



To register at a location nearest you, go online to this web site:

[NETCAST REGISTRATION](#). Click on the course title you are interested in, then click on the "Sign Up" button to view the available sites for that session, then click "Sign Up" again to register. Space is limited at each location, as noted on the sign-up page.

If you have difficulty registering, please contact Carol at [carol.stoddard@state.or.us](mailto:carol.stoddard@state.or.us) or 503-378-3600 ext. 2321. Please do not "create a new site" yourself without coordinating with Carol. Thanks! ☺

### How Are We Doing?

We are always interested in your experiences. Send any feedback via email to [LuAnn.Anderson@state.or.us](mailto:LuAnn.Anderson@state.or.us). Please include any ideas you have for future issues.

If you would like to be added to, or removed from, the email ListServ that receives this newsletter, please email [Carol.Stoddard@state.or.us](mailto:Carol.Stoddard@state.or.us) and reference Transition Toolbox.

