

A Practitioner's Manual on an Introduction to Transition Assessment

By, Tina Anderson & Ashley L. Bray

The George Washington University

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Introduction

This manual is intended to be used for evaluators, educators and practitioners as a guide on transition assessment and it's role in the overall transition process.

Defining Transition Assessment

According to Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte (2007) "Transition assessment is an ongoing process of collecting information on the student's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future living, learning and working environments. This process should begin in middle school and continue until the student graduates or exits high school. Information from this process should be used to drive the IEP and transition planning process and to develop the SOP document detailing the student's academic and functional performance and postsecondary goals." Transition assessment can often be overlooked and underutilized part of the transition process. During the 1990's the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated that transition services be included into a student's IEP plan (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007). As part of this mandate, a shift to focus more on the student's needs and interests was included as part of the IDEA legislation. This piece of legislation used assessment and self-determination as foundations for services; with the ultimate goal being that transition assessment support the student in indentifying their individual needs, strengths, preferences and interests as it relates to post-secondary goals (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007).

The chart below helps defines more specific details about what is and what is not transition assessment.

Transition Assessment is...	Transition Assessment is not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ongoing and cumulative •Individualized •Based on student's strength's, needs, interests and goals •A process in which the student develops self-awareness •Used to develop appropriate postsecondary goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Done once a year •Using the same assessment for every student •Only completed before the IEP to fill out the transition forms •Only the special educator's responsibility

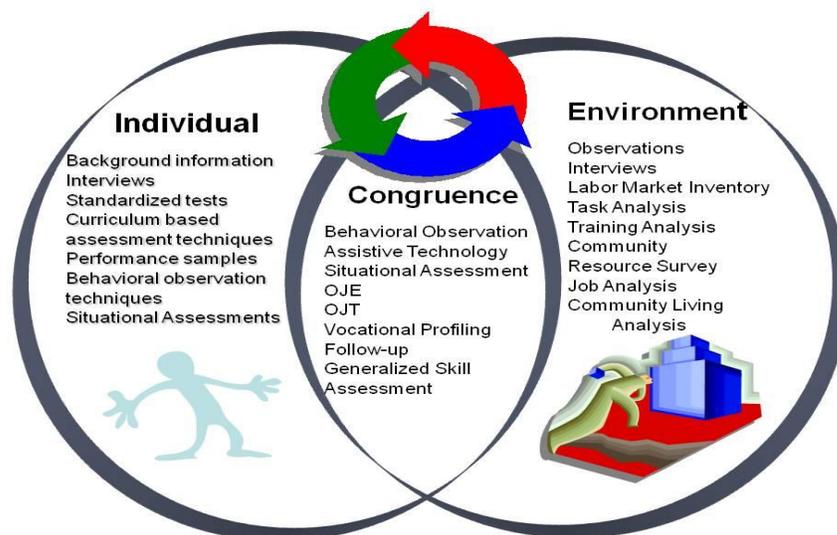
Goals of Transition Assessment

There are several goals related to transition assessment. Ultimately, the goal of transition assessment is to have the self-determined student continuously evaluating their goals and outcomes based on ongoing learning about themselves. As asserted by Morningstar (2011) first and foremost, students make informed choices, they learn about themselves. They learn about their interests, preferences, barriers and needs. As students learn about themselves, they begin to take charge of the transition process. They use results from assessments to become self-determined and achieve outcomes. Students understand skills needed for post school environments; they are able to compare future skills to their current level to determine how to get there. Students develop post-secondary goals related to education and training, employment and independent living. Lastly, as the student goes through this process they continue to define and redefine their goals, this is a continuous process.

Student Needs

Throughout the transition process, the student's needs should always be at the forefront of the teacher/evaluator's mind when planning, assessing and developing goals. This is especially true in regards to the transition assessment. When administering assessments with the

student there are several things for the evaluator or teacher to keep in mind in regards to the students needs. Evaluators need to specifically look at a student's learning characteristics, styles of interactions, interests and motivation, communication, social skills, functional routines and any health or safety concerns. For the transition assessment to really maximize efficiency in goal planning, the evaluator also needs to observe that physical setting in which student is being assessed as well as including any parent and professional partnerships that may impact the student. Once the information is gathered about both the student and the potential environment, the evaluator can compare the student's needs, interests, strengths and preferences with that of the demands of the target environment (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007). Student's needs, as well as the environment need to be continuously reassessed throughout the student's tenure in the transition process in order to ensure that the match continues to be a good fit, it matches the student's interests and that the student is able to perform at level that matches the demands of the environment.



Types of Assessment

There are both formal and informal assessments that are used during the transition process. The goal of formal assessments is to get an idea of academic performance. Formal assessments are typically pencil and paper and are standardized assessments. Some examples include Wide Range Achievement Test, the Kaufman, the Test of Adult Basic Education, the Woodcock-Johnson, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children –V, and the Peabody. The Wide Range Achievement Test also known as the WRAT, is a very well respected, norm-referenced assessment that measures academic skills such as word reading, sentence comprehension, spelling and math. This assessment comes in two equivalent forms which allow retesting within a short period of time without changing outcomes. The Kaufman is a clinical instrument for assessing cognitive development. It is intended to be used in conjunction with other assessments and should not be used as a complete test battery. The Test of Adult Basic Education, also known as the TABE, is a timed 2½ hour assessment that measures competency in reading, math and language. Again, this instrument is not designed to be used alone but with other assessment instruments. The Woodcock-Johnson is known for covering a wide range of cognitive skills and provides general intellectual ability. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-V, also known as the WISC-V, assesses academic achievement and assesses reading, math, writing and oral language. The Peabody, is a picture vocabulary assessment that measures receptive language. This assessment assists in developing rapport and relationship building as it has high interest value.

Informal assessments are less structured than formal assessment and may not be validated or tested for reliability. Teachers, evaluators or other service providers often develop informal assessments. These types of assessments can include portfolios, interest inventories, work

samples and personal preference questionnaires. The goal of informal assessments is to get a sense of the student's interest and preferences so that a transition plan may be developed that truly captures the student.

Community Based

Community based assessments are a type of informal, holistic assessment that evaluates the student's needs, interests and ability in a job/work environment that is located in the community. Community based assessments are unique in that they provided experiences for the student that cannot be obtained through other types of assessment. Not only does it integrate the student into an environment with their peers and the greater community but also, provides the opportunity for the student's behavior and skills to be observed as they interact with the environment. On the larger scale, community based assessments help promote partnerships between schools, community providers and employers. Community based assessment is an umbrella term that encompasses; situational assessments, on-the-job evaluations, and job try-outs/trials.

Situational Assessments

Situational assessments are often the most common type of community-based assessments. Situational assessments occur when a more formal partnership between the employer and the student are created. Prospective employers are sought out based on the type of job and environment that is determined by the student's interests and preferences. Generally, situational assessments occur over a two to three day period and cover a variety of tasks for the student to participate in over various times. Feedback from the employer should be sought out to provide the student with immediate and tangible feedback. For practitioners, situational

assessments provide the opportunity to document a student's strengths and needs across settings (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007). For students, situational assessment allows the student to see him or her self in adult life and provides the springboard for motivating students to explore several of their interests as they relate to community, leisure, work and postsecondary education (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007).

On-the-job evaluations

On-the job evaluation usually implies that the client or student is already employed. On-the-job evaluations can occur when the student need to learn or master a new task. They can also be utilized when there is a gap in the student's performance and they are not meeting appropriate productivity standards. On-the job evaluations are different from situational assessment and job try-outs because during these types of evaluations, the evaluator can only assess one task.

Job try-outs/trails

Job try-outs and trains are similar to situational assessment; however, the key difference is that job try0outs/trails can sometimes contain the promise of employment. During job-tryouts, feedback from the employer is often immediate and can result in the client or student getting the job. Building and maintaining relationships with employers is one of the keys to success for job try-outs and trails.

Work Samples

Work samples are another type of informal assessment. Works samples are different from community-based assessments in that they replicate the work but not the environment. There are two different types of work samples: commercially made and locally developed.

Commercially made work samples are usually found in schools or rehabilitation facilities. Examples of commercially made work samples include the Talen Assessment Program (TAP) or the Valpar commercial made work samples. Commercial made work samples cover standardized with directions, tasks, and materials, scoring and are already validated and tested for reliability. One of the downfalls to commercially made work samples are that they can become quickly outdated. Locally developed work samples are generally developed by teachers or a vocational evaluator and can be tailored for a specific job or task. Locally developed work samples are not always validated for tested or reliability. One of the pros to locally developed work samples are that they can be designed with student's needs, interests, and accommodations in mind.

Outcomes for IEP Planning & Interpreting Results

It is not enough just have the student participate in the transition assessment; the assessment must be utilized during in the IEP process to identify a student's performance both functionally and academically. The student's performance on the assessment coupled with observations made from their support team and their in-classroom performance help set the foundation for their IEP goals. It is not enough just to articulate a student's preferences, interests, strengths, behavior and performance during the IEP meeting; everyone needs to leave the IEP meeting feeling that they have captured whom the student is (Leconte, 2006). It is important that during the IEP meeting that you are matching between the student's current and future environments to support the student in relating their attributes to the setting they wish to participate. Some sample objective that can be used for all goal planning include; employment, postsecondary education, maintaining a home, involvement in the community, and satisfactory personal and social relationships (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007).

Additionally, self-determination should always be an underlying goal through the transition planning process.

Self-Determination

Self-determination is often defined as one of the key players in the transition process. Through the lens of student-centered planning, students are encouraged and taught to be active participants and advocates during the assessment and planning process. Self-determination can be defined in many ways throughout the process, however, its bases lies in the student's ability to increase self-awareness by being able to identify one's own strengths, barriers, needs, preferences and interests (Field & Hoffman, 2007). When a student becomes an empowered member of their own IEP planning team, they become better self-advocates and will often have more input the goal planning process and more motivation to follow through on achieving those goals (Leconte, 2006). It is important that process of teaching and encouraging student to use self-determination begin early on during the transition process. Student's, who show more self-determination earlier on, are often the students who see the most success in post-secondary life. The life-long impact of self-determination allow student's to develop the confidence and awareness needed to take risks and develop goals for the future that are both concentrated and self-regulated.

The chart below can be used to help assess a student's IEP Self-Determination skills as it relates to the preparation, performance and implementation:

Assessing IEP Self-Determination Skills
IEP Preparation
1. Does the student understand the purpose of the IEP meeting?
2. Can the student explain the law guaranteeing his or her rights and requiring the IEP?

<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Does the student know who will be attending the IEP meeting?4. Whom does the student want to invite to the IEP meeting?5. Does the student know what roles the IEP participants will play?6. Has the student reviewed the current assessment information?7. Has the student developed a list of personal goals to share at the meeting?8. Has the student developed a list of questions to ask at the meeting?9. Has the student practice expressing his or her interests, preferences, and strengths?10. Is the student prepared to ask for instruction and/or curriculum accommodations?
<p>IEP Performance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Did the student know was in attendance as the IEP meeting and their roles?2. Was the student able to express his or her interests, preferences and abilities?3. Did the student express his or her personal goals and aspirations?4. Did the student ask relevant questions?5. Did the student request appropriate accommodations (if needed)?6. Did the student express personal responsibility for goal seeking and attainment?7. Did the student facilitate or co-facilitate the IEP meeting?8. Is the student satisfied with the IEP meeting outcome/results?9. What does the student think could have been done to improve the meeting?
<p>IEP Implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Does the student attend class on time?2. Does the student request instructional support when needed?3. Does the student request testing accommodations when needed?4. Does the student assume responsibility for successes and failures?5. Is the student aware of working toward IEP goals?6. Does the student believe he or she is receiving the support needed to reach IEP goals?7. Has the student explored postsecondary options and support services?8. Can the student explain which postsecondary options match his or her goals and needs?9. Has the student developed a plan and timeline for contacting adult service providers?

(Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007).

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