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# Introduction

Successful transition from school to the adult world—whether it is to postsecondary education, employment, or military service—is a society-supported outcome for the vast majority of students today. As educators and others in the helping professions, we expect our students and clients to become contributing members of society. There has been significant legislation passed to address the transition needs of students receiving special education services. Congress recently updated the nation’s special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004), and sought to improve postsecondary results for students with disabilities by requiring public high schools to provide better transition planning. Congress stated that providing effective transition services to promote successful postschool education or employment becomes an important measure of a school’s accountability for the postsecondary performance of its students. To strengthen transition planning, several new requirements have been added to IDEA.

- IDEA 2004 adds the new requirement that transition services be based on the student’s strengths as well as his or her preferences and interests. The addition of the strength-base orientation makes it clear that the development of transition goals should focus on and build upon what the student can do, and not focus entirely on what the student cannot do.
- Activities developed as part of transition services must be within a results-oriented process, ensuring that activities included are designed to produce success for the individual.
- IDEA 2004 has established one clear starting age requirement for transition planning. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams must now include transition planning in the first IEP that will be in effect when the child turns 16 years old. Many transition experts and advocates feel that age 16 is too late to start transition planning. IDEA 2004’s federal regulations make it clear that IEP teams are free to begin transition planning at an earlier age if the team determines it appropriate to do so. Many students with learning disabilities can benefit from transition planning activities that begin in middle school.

Some legislation supports school-to-work transition education for all students. The School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA; U.S. 103rd Congress, 1994b), coupled with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (U.S. 103rd Congress, 1994a), prompted school-based education that is tied to employment and other adult outcomes as well as to work-based education that provides students the rationale for learning applied academic skills and information.

National standards have been developed to guide educational and career planning for all students. The *National Career Development Guidelines* (NCDG) provide a framework of knowledge and skills that young people and adults need to manage their careers effectively, from decisions about school to that first job and beyond. The guidelines, originally developed in 1986, were revised in 2004 by America’s Career Resource

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Network (ACRN; 2004). The *National Standards for School Counseling Programs* established by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA; Campbell & Dahir, 1997) identified three core areas of development as goals for comprehensive developmental school counseling programs: academic, career, and personal–social. The *National Standards for School Counseling Programs* specify three important areas of student career development.

- **Standard A.** Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.
- **Standard B.** Students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction.
- **Standard C.** Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work.

What was once thought to be necessary for special populations of students has been shown to be critical for all of the students we serve.

Questions arise as we think about career planning—When should it begin? Who should participate? What should the outcomes be? How can we find the time to integrate career planning into educational programs given the high stakes associated with academic demands? Obviously, there is no one right answer to these questions, and—as with much in education—flexibility and creativity are critical to success.

## A Developmental Process

Career planning is a developmental process that builds on the student’s knowledge, skills, and experiences. Table 1 illustrates a recommended planning process that follows the sequence of awareness, exploration, and planning. The elementary experience is one of increasing awareness of students’ interests and the world of work. Students are taught terminology and the organization of careers by clusters. In middle school, students begin to explore their interests and abilities in more depth as they begin to relate their interests to possible careers. The high school experience is one of increasing specificity in planning and skill development, accompanied by real-world experiences in particular career areas.

As early as 1994, the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children adopted a definition of transition that promoted the notion that transition education starts in the beginning levels of schooling and that students should be intricately involved in this process whenever possible. The DCDT definition reads as follows:

Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by the broad concept of career development. Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and

**Table 1 Career Planning Process—Student Outcomes**

Grade Level	Student Outcomes
Elementary school students	Awareness of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their interests</li> <li>• career clusters</li> <li>• value of work</li> <li>• sources for information</li> </ul>
Middle school students	Exploration of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more in-depth information about careers</li> <li>• their interests, abilities, and values</li> <li>• the relationship of coursework to occupations</li> <li>• job-shadowing experiences, mentors</li> </ul>
High school students	Planning for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities to fine-tune their interests, abilities, and work-related values</li> <li>• opportunities to enhance their employability skills</li> <li>• detailed career-information searches</li> <li>• opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment</li> </ul>

students should be encouraged, to the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a minimum amount of responsibility for such planning (Halpern, 1994, p. 117).

This position has been affirmed numerous times in the professional literature (c.f., Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2004; Repetto & Correa, 1996; Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996; Sitlington & Clark, 2006; Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000; Wehman, 2001).

### **An Accountable Process**

The public education reform movement that began in the 1980s and was highlighted by the Nation at Risk report (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983) has stressed the necessity of showing accountability for outcomes or results. Although the processes in which we involve our students are important, what really matters most are the skills and knowledge students develop—the outcomes—that are the results of the programs we provide. A critical component of accountability is assessment—both informally and formally—of preexisting, interim, and postintervention information and skills. Essentially, accountability answers the question “What do students know and what are they able to do as a result of participating in transition programs?” Effective transition and career planning programs show their accountability for students’ outcomes in a variety of ways. Some of these demonstrate process data whereas others show outcome data. Table 2 illustrates examples of accountability data.

**Table 1 Accountability Data for Transition Programs**

Process Data	Outcome, Results, or Product Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest inventories given to all students</li> <li>• Career fair held for students in Grade 9</li> <li>• Job-shadowing activity provided during summer break</li> <li>• Supported employment assistance available</li> <li>• Number of parents attending an information session about transition and career planning</li> <li>• Transition planning inventories given to all students with disabilities</li> <li>• Curriculum-based assessment related to lifelong living, learning, and working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95% of students in Grade 8 have a completed an educational/career plan</li> <li>• 90% of students know the steps in one model of decision making (competency from NCDG)</li> <li>• 80% of students have had successful employment experiences of 6 months or longer</li> <li>• All students in Grade 9 have completed an interest inventory and have identified three occupations which match their interests</li> <li>• 100% of all students receiving special education services have appropriate transition plans on their IEPs</li> </ul>

Note. NCDG = *National Career Development Guidelines* (America's Career Resource Network, 2004).  
IEP = Individualized Education Program.

Process data are defined as data that tell us what the processes are that are occurring—that is, what actions are the program implementers taking to provide the program? Outcome data are sometimes referred to as results or product data and are described as data that are focused on student results—that is, what skills and knowledge have the students gained as a result of participation in the program? The informal assessments in this book can provide many ways to learn about students, have them learn about themselves and make plans for their futures, and demonstrate the effectiveness of transition programs.

### Informal Assessment for Transition Delivery Models

The assessment tools in this book are useful for teachers, counselors, special educators, and others, and the instruments can be implemented in a wide variety of settings and delivery models. Some users are likely to have minimal time allocated for transition programming; others will have group sessions, class periods, or entire courses in which to work with students. Table 3 illustrates some of the delivery models frequently used.

Whether you have a few minutes a week for individual sessions or a semester- or year-long course dedicated to transition and career planning, the informal assessments offered here can be used to involve your students systematically in transition planning. We provide these instruments, assessments, and the ideas about delivery models to illustrate the variety of tools and settings available for use on the instructional day to address the transition needs of all students. Professionals will, of course, use their judgment to select the settings and methods most appropriate to meet their students' needs.

**Table 3** Informal Assessment for Transition Delivery Models

Individual assessment	One on one with individual students <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• who have special needs</li><li>• who have unique interests</li><li>• as a part of counseling and educational planning</li></ul>
Small-group assessment	In group sessions organized <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• around specific career interests</li><li>• for specific needs</li><li>• to promote in-depth career planning</li><li>• for special interests outside of school</li><li>• at employment or community sites</li></ul>
Class assessment	Class assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to address basic information that all students need</li><li>• to integrate the information into the academic content</li><li>• to assist large groups of students in career planning in an inclusive setting</li></ul>
Grade-level or school assessment	In advisories or homerooms, conduct informal assessments as a pre- or postactivity for <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a school-wide career fair</li><li>• course selection for the following school year</li><li>• selecting career speakers</li><li>• as a needs assessment for vocational preparation curricula</li></ul>

### Background for This Book

This book is the first of three companion books to *Informal Assessments for Transition Planning* (Clark, Patton, & Moulton, 2000). These books extend the informal assessments found in the original volume to include employment and career planning, postsecondary education and training, and personal and social competence. *Informal Assessments for Transition Planning* was designed to provide school professionals a source for informal assessments in the transition planning process. Conceptually, it was designed to move from a general transition inventory, the *Transition Planning Inventory* (Clark & Patton, 2006), to more specific assessment of areas that appeared to be missing, unknown, or were uncertain due to discrepancies in information. That book provided a Comprehensive Informal Inventory of Knowledge and Skills for Transition and 45 selected samples of informal assessments across the nine transition planning domains of the *Transition Planning Inventory*.

### About This Book

This book provides 60 informal instruments that have come to our attention and for which permission has been granted for use in this book. These informal assessments

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are organized into four sections: Interests and Preferences, Abilities and Skills, Career Exploration, and Job Search and Securing. Within each section, the informal assessments are organized from simple to complex, allowing the instructor to select tools to best meet students' needs. When assessments are lengthy, the format has been designed to allow for use in smaller sections so that students are not overwhelmed by the large number of items. An arrow in the lower right corner of the assessment indicates that it is continued on the following page. Informal assessments designed for teacher, parent, and supervisor input are located at the end of each section. The sections represent four areas of assessment that are critical to transition planning and decision making. They are defined in the following paragraphs.

### **Interests and Preferences**

The informal assessments in this section focus on measures that describe the student's degree of interest, strength of motivation and drive, and work-related values. Super (1957), who has pioneered interest measurement, identified the following three types of interests:

1. *Expressed interest*—The verbal statement of liking for any stimulus such as an object, activity, task, or occupation. Research has suggested that expressed interests are not as good a predictor of occupational choice as interest inventories (Whiston, 2000).
2. *Manifest interest*—The evidence of participation in an activity, occupation, or task that can be observed by others.
3. *Tested interest*—Interests measured by such objective approaches as free-association measures.

Work-related values or preferences may include advancement, achievement, altruism, competition, fairness, friendships at work, health, income, independence, interesting work, variety, location of work, people contact, physical appearance, security, work environment, and predictable work (Power, 2006).

### **Abilities and Skills**

The informal assessments in this section provide information to help understand the student's strengths and weaknesses in relation to various abilities and skills associated with the world of work. The demands include reading, writing, perceptual abilities, and the ability to understand and follow directions.

### **Career Exploration**

The informal assessments in this section examine the student's skills, knowledge, and experience related to exploring a variety of occupations and careers. Students learn the skills necessary for accessing and using educational and occupational information. These competencies are essential for moving forward with educational and career planning.

### **Job Search and Securing**

The informal assessments in this section address the need for students to develop skills and acquire knowledge in making the transition to employment. Specific

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skills, such as composing a resume and a cover letter or performing well in a job interview, are addressed.

A list of the instruments included in each section of this book can be found at the beginning of the four sections. Each instrument is coded according to who (teacher, parent or guardian, employer, or student) should complete it.

## Transition Planning

Transition planning is critical for all students and is a shared responsibility among all educators, our students, their families, and our communities. From early in elementary school through graduation from high school and involvement in postsecondary and career activities, we all have many opportunities to influence favorably the successful transition of our students. It is our desire that these informal assessments assist you in your efforts.

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