

DEMYSTIFYING  
**Transition  
Assessment**

by

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and

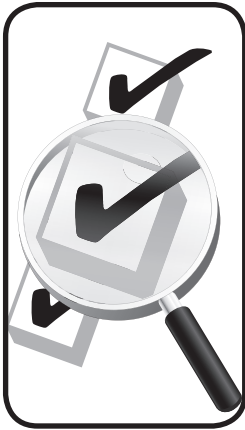
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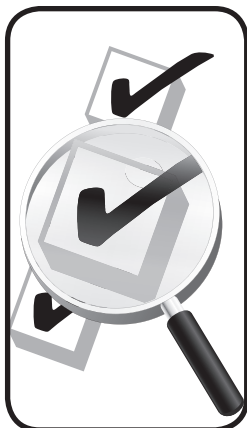
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# 1

## Transition Assessment

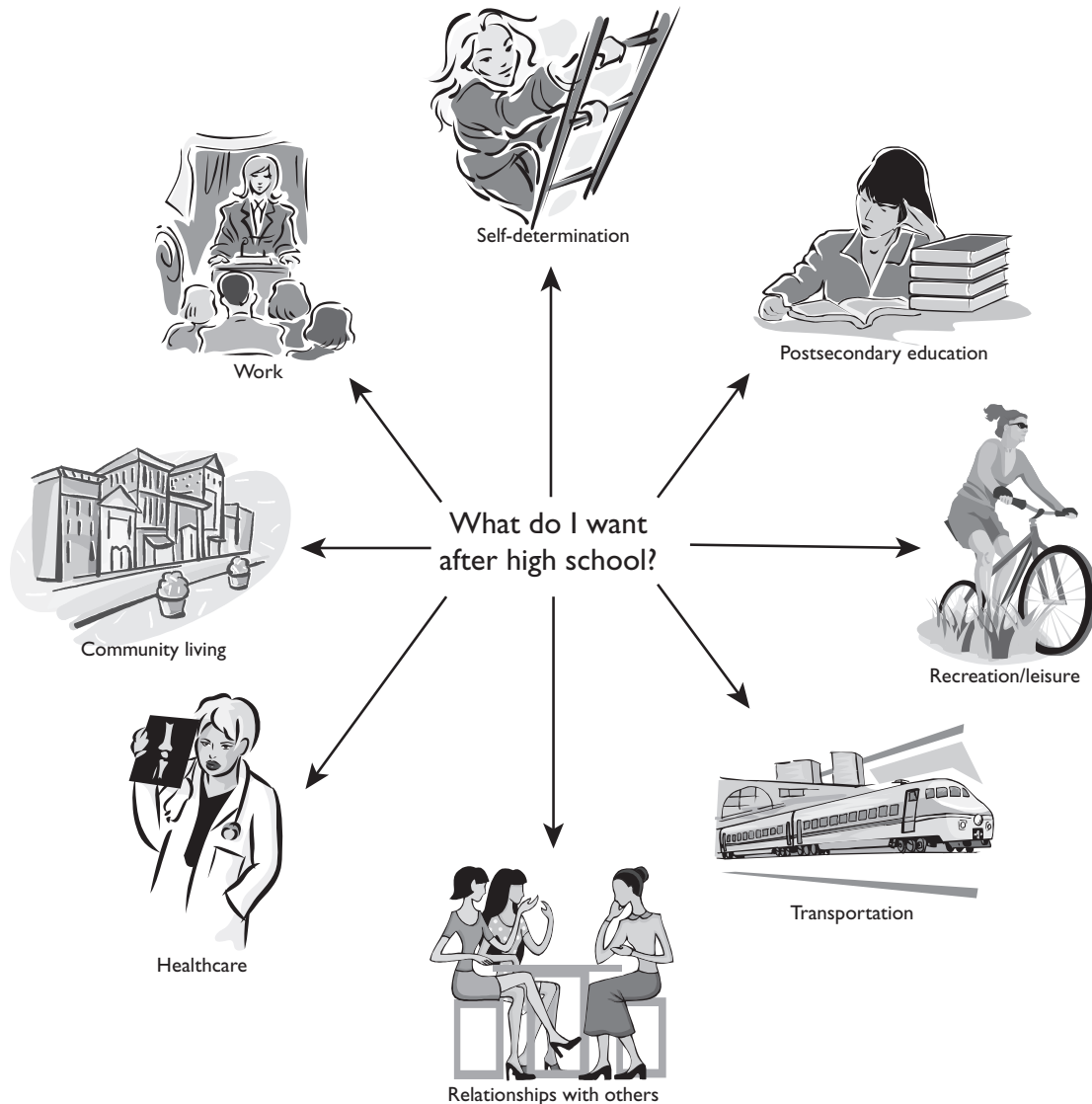
Ronald Tamura and Colleen A. Thoma

*What do you want to do after high school?* Many teenagers struggle with answering that question and often will answer it by saying that they don't know. While some students know exactly what they want to do and where they want to live—and with whom—many articulate more vague ideas or have tentative plans that change as experience and life events shift. But even the students who answer by saying “I don't know” generally have ideas about some of the components of their vision for an adult life. For example, they might plan to go to college after high school but might not have a specific employment goal. Students this age typically need help learning about their options and envisioning a full life that includes goals in multiple life domains, as Figure 1.1 illustrates.

This book will help guide you to use assessments to help students with disabilities identify their plans for adult life and to establish the steps that will help them achieve those goals. It is an exciting and challenging process of discovery—one in which the assessments themselves can become part of the learning experience. Sitlington, Neubert, and Clark define *transition assessment* as “an ongoing and coordinated process that begins in the middle school years and continues until students with disabilities graduate or exit the school system. Transition assessment assists students with disabilities and their families to identify and plan for postsecondary goals and adult roles” (2010, p. 1).

It is a process for determining a student's strengths, preferences, and interests, which are then used to identify appropriate instruction, supports, and services that assist in the transition from school to postschool life. It is a discovery process that, if done well, illuminates a path for his or her future. And that's what transition assessment is all about: identifying activities that help students and their transition planning team learn more about themselves so they can make “wise decisions” (Thoma, Bartholomew, & Scott, 2009, p. 13) for their adult lives.

This book follows Mr. David, a transition specialist who works for a school district in a state in the Midwest, as he learns about transition assessment and applies what he learns in order to meet the needs of the students he is responsible to assess. In particular, the book will chronicle the assessment strategies he found useful in assessing two students, Chris and Michelle, who illustrate the range of assessment needs.



**Figure 1.1.** Transition planning domains. (From Thoma, C.A., Bartholomew, C.C., & Scott, L.A. [2009]. *Universal design for transition: A roadmap for planning and instruction* [p. 12]. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.; adapted by permission.)

## MEET MR. DAVID AND TWO STUDENTS

### Mr. David

Mr. David is in his first year of his position as a transition specialist for a small school district in the Midwest. He is excited about this position since he has recently completed a graduate degree program in transition, and he's looking forward to applying that knowledge in the real world. Mr. David has had less direct experience than most of the other teachers in his graduate program since his previous teaching job was in a middle school and he was responsible for the education of students younger than 14. But he always saw the need to begin transition planning early, and he found ways to link academic instruction to



real-world skills and events so as to increase students' interest in learning the material and create an opportunity to prepare them, ultimately, for their adult lives; in fact, that was what drew him to enroll in the graduate program. In addition, Mr. David himself struggled in the transition from high school to adult life and in finding his own vision for an adult life. He wants to mentor others and help them make informed decisions.

Mr. David is responsible for a relatively diverse group of students who attend two different high schools in the area. These students have a wide range of support needs and represent each of the disability categories recognized by the school district and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 (PL 108-446). This book highlights two of these students, Michelle and Chris, who represent students with very different strengths and needs related to transition assessment. Michelle, as a young woman with autism, requires that transition assessment be conducted creatively and collaboratively, since she is not always able to communicate her preferences and interests verbally. Chris, as a young man with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), is the type of student for whom transition planning and services is often overlooked, since he is on target to graduate from high school on time and with a standard diploma and to transition to college and employment. While each of these students has different needs that will require different transition assessment practices, they each need a focused and coordinated transition assessment process nonetheless. The following information describes each of these students.

## Michelle

Michelle is a 16-year-old with autism who sporadically uses a communication device to interact with others around her. She is currently a sophomore in high school and is included in the general education classes for English, science, math, world history, physical education, and art. She also attends a resource room setting for one period a day during which time she receives extra help learning study skills, transition, and other individualized education program (IEP) goals. On most days, her behavior gets in the way of her learning, but her school fully includes all students in general education classrooms, providing necessary supports wherever the student is.

Michelle is a friendly person who likes to listen to music and spend time with her small group of friends. Michelle gets help from her parents to complete most daily activities, although her teachers believe she could and should do more of these independently. Michelle seems to like her world history class the best, as she seldom engages in disruptive behavior in that class. Her world history teacher often has the students in the class interact as part of her "living history" curriculum. Michelle really liked when she was able to dress like a Roman when learning about Rome and the influence that Rome had on the world.

Michelle's disruptive behaviors include hitting her own face, making loud noises, and walking or running around the classroom. Such behaviors seem to occur when Michelle is asked to focus on work quietly at her desk or when the work is particularly difficult. A functional behavior analysis confirmed that the behaviors function to provide an opportunity for her to escape or avoid an unpleasant or difficult situation. Her teacher has been working to help her learn one or two replacement behaviors to either 1) ask for help or 2) request a break, but she has experienced limited success.

Michelle rides the bus to and from school every day, and she also has an older brother who also attends the same high school. When asked about the future, Michelle

doesn't indicate any interest in either working or going to college. Her parents have asked Mr. David to help them with transition planning, but he has struggled with finding a way to understand what Michelle might want to do in the future.

Mr. David is considering recommending that Michelle start the school's vocational program, which would allow her to receive credit for work experience in lieu of her resource period. Due to Michelle's challenging behavior, the teacher of the vocational courses is hesitant to accept her into the program, but Mr. David believes that if they could find a job that Michelle would enjoy, she would do well. The vocational program that the school offers includes a variety of work experiences (e.g., office, daycare, nurse's office, library, auto shop, wood shop, and a variety of off-campus sites). Some of the off-campus sites include the local hospital, a large retail store, a lawyer's office, a fast food restaurant, and a catering business. The vocational program also includes an off-campus apartment that can be used to teach skills that students might need to learn in order to live more independently.

## Chris

Chris is a 16-year-old who has been identified as having ADHD. Chris is currently a sophomore in high school who is in general education classes, including English, honors chemistry, honors geometry, world history, Spanish, physical education, and jazz band.

Chris would be considered to be nervous or uncertain at times when interacting with adults; however, he likes to engage his peers in conversations about music and girls. Chris has been playing the guitar since he was 12 years old and has developed into a gifted player who frequently plays in concerts at the school and also has started his own band (as the lead guitarist). Chris would say that he likes school but finds a lot of the material and lessons boring. He especially loves his honors chemistry class because he is allowed to create different compounds and work with his hands. He generally does well in class, but at times he forgets to complete homework or turn it in on time. He struggles with organizing his work, his time, and his materials in general.

He would also say that he likes hanging out at the lake with his friends and eating pizza. Chris is learning how to drive, making his parents nervous about his distractibility and lack of focus. He takes the bus to and from school but cannot wait until he can drive to school. When asked about the future, Chris would say, "I know that my parents want me to go to college, but I would like to travel around Europe for a year and just relax. I would like to go to college for computer science eventually." Finishing high school cannot come soon enough for Chris.

This year, Chris is meeting with his counselors to discuss future college options, and he will be setting up various campus visits for the summer with his parents. He will also be thinking about taking more science and math courses at the honors level during his junior year. He has said that if he goes to college, he would like to live in an apartment or a dorm but is not sure where he would like to go.

Now that the transition specialist, Mr. David, and two students, Chris and Michelle, have been introduced, this chapter will provide an overview of transition assessment strategies.

## TRANSITION, TRANSITION ASSESSMENT, AND IDEA

IDEA 2004 (PL 108-446) defines transition services as

a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional

achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; it is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (§ 1401[602][34])

This definition highlights the main purpose of transition assessment: that is, identifying a student’s postschool goals as well as his or her strengths, preferences, and interests. Not only is transition assessment a wise practice; it is also a required part of a student’s education plan. IDEA 2004 requires that the individualized education program (IEP) for students age 16 years or older must include “appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills” (Title 34, C.F.R. 300.320[b] and [c]; Title 20, U.S.C. § 1414[d][1][A][i][VIII]).

In order to create and implement measurable postsecondary education goals, you must understand what information is needed to create a full picture of a student’s strengths, needs, preferences, and interests; make informed decisions about which types of assessments would yield that information; and, once the types are identified, feel confident that you are choosing specific assessments that would determine how you can use that information gathered through assessments (e.g., formal, informal, alternative/performance based) in order to develop transition planning.

Wiggins and McTighe (2006) recommend a backward design process to help teachers effectively link instruction and assessment. This approach uses three steps, which are outlined in Table 1.1.

### Purposes of Transition Planning

Consider the wide range of students in order to understand the possible purposes for assessment that would need to be included in a comprehensive transition assessment

**Table 1.1.** Backward design process applied to transition assessment

Step	Definition	Transition example
Identify desired results	Determine what you want students to know, understand, and/or be able to do.	What do you want to understand about a student’s preferences, interests, strengths, and/or needs? Do you want to assess one transition domain such as employment or a more global area such as self-determination? What are the student’s goals for his or her own transition to adult life?
Determine acceptable evidence	What type of information will provide evidence of a student’s strengths and needs and/or preferences and interests?	What type of assessment data will you need? Will you need performance-based information, or will a more formal assessment be necessary? How will you know whether a student’s goals are attainable?
Plan learning experiences	What types of learning experiences or other instructional activities will be needed to meet the desired results?	What transition experiences do you need to provide students so that they can achieve their transition outcomes?

Source: Wiggins and McTighe (2006).

process. First, and most obvious, is the need to assess student preferences and interests across the range of transition domains. Those assessments are needed to provide a *vision* for the student's adult life in terms of employment, postsecondary education, community living, independence, transportation, and recreation/leisure activities. This vision serves as the beginning of the backward planning process: Before a transition plan can be put in place, the desired outcome (or result) needs to be identified.

Educators who work with students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds need to use assessment strategies that match the same purposes as assessment strategies of students with disabilities, but they may need to use modified strategies to ensure that the assessments are culturally sensitive and/or translated into the student's native language when necessary. Trainor indicated that research is needed to determine whether current transition assessment and educational practices are effective "in addressing the specific strengths and needs of diverse youth with disabilities due to a lack of empirical investigations that have taken participants' sociocultural backgrounds into consideration" (2008, p. 153). Tips and strategies for conducting an appropriate transition assessment for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are included throughout this book, but educators who work with this unique population of students should seek more detailed information from books and guides specifically focused on this topic (see Greene, 2011).

The second purpose of transition assessment is to determine *student strengths and needs* that relate to making that vision a reality. Mr. David needs information that could be used to identify annual goals and the supports, services, and accommodations that a specific student would need to achieve that vision for an adult life. This part of transition assessment should provide information about the requirements of the postschool settings so that it can be determined whether a student has the necessary skills to succeed in that new environment. And in those instances when the student does not have the requisite skills, the transition plan can articulate the coordinated set of activities that will help him or her realize that vision for the future. This purpose of transition assessment would include an assessment of self-determination, aptitude, and achievement and functional skills. It includes a baseline assessment as well as an assessment of progress on meeting annual and long-range transition goals.

The third and final purpose of transition assessment is to *document eligibility* for the various adult services a student would need in order to make his or her vision for an adult life a reality. This might include the information necessary to document one's disability to receive services at college for Chris or the application for vocational rehabilitation services for Michelle. For other students, it might include a reevaluation for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or an application for Section 8 housing assistance. Applying for these kinds of adult services generally is not the responsibility of transition specialists like Mr. David, but such specialists do play a role in helping students and parents become

### Did You Know?

A person-centered planning process can be used to meet the first purpose of transition assessment, helping culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students with disabilities and their families "actively participate in the planning for the future and identify cultural, economic and community variables that may impact transition planning" (Neubert, 2012, p. 83).

aware of the different types of services that might be available, providing contact information and inviting representatives of these agencies to participate in transition planning meetings, and/or providing educational documentation to support an eligibility determination when requested by the student and family. This purpose for transition assessment also includes completing a Summary of Performance (SOP): a document that provides a description of the results of assessments completed throughout a student's academic career as well as the services provided to that student while in school. The SOP is defined by IDEA 2004 as "a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals" (§ 300.305[e][3]).

### Assessment as a Process of Discovery

To better understand effective transition assessment strategies, it is important to start by identifying effective assessment strategies in general. While some assessment resources categorize assessment practices into two broad categories—formal and informal (e.g., Spinelli, 2012; Test, 2012)—it can be even more helpful to categorize assessment practices into three distinct groups: formal, informal, and alternative/performance-based (Thoma et al., 2009). That distinction can help educational professionals think broadly about the range of assessment procedures and include the kinds of performance-based assessments that are particularly useful in terms of informing transition planning. Three categories or types of assessments make a distinction between informal and paper-and-pencil types of assessments and those that require a student to perform some activity to demonstrate his or her knowledge and/or skill. The following sections will explore each of these three types of assessment procedures and their application to transition planning.

Mr. David reviewed the characteristics of each of the three types of assessments—and examples of specific assessment strategies that fall under each—to help him begin to identify transition assessment strategies and instruments that he could use for Chris and Michelle. A list of transition assessments is included at the end of this book. This transition assessment list includes a range of assessments that are available for purchase or at no cost, cover one or more transition planning areas, and fall into one or more assessment categories. This list is meant to be as comprehensive as possible, but it is important to note that given individual student's unique needs, there may be other available assessment procedures not listed that might be more appropriate.

### FORMAL ASSESSMENTS

Formal assessments, or standardized assessments, "compare a student's performance with that of peers who are similar in age or grade level" (Spinelli, 2012, p. 57). Formal

#### Did You Know?

The word *assessment* comes from the Latin word *assidere*, which means "to sit down to" (Wiktionary, 2012). Remember to be sure that your transition assessment process honors this spirit; in addition to the formal assessment procedures you use, ensure that you honor what you know about students from the time you spend with them.

### Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Tip

When trying to identify a formal assessment for use with students from diverse cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, pay attention to information about its reliability and validity for those specific subpopulations. If available, this information can be found in the reviews published in the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* as well as in the instructional manuals provided with each formal assessment.

assessments are objective tests developed by experts and designed to be administered to a large group of individuals. These assessments are administered, scored, and interpreted according to specific standards. Formal assessments are developed to be used by a specific group of individuals (by age or other categorization such as disability, ethnic background, or language—to name a few), to be reliable, and to be valid. Before choosing a formal assessment, Mr. David reviewed this information in the technical manual to determine 1) whether the test was designed for use with students like Chris or Michelle, 2) what it was designed to measure (validity), and 3) how consistently it measured what it was designed to measure (reliability). This information will help meet the second step of the backward design process; that is, it will help answer the question of whether the assessment provides acceptable evidence to determine whether desired results are achieved.

Formal assessments can be designed to measure what someone has already learned (achievement) or what he or she might be capable of learning in the future (aptitude); they may be part of a standardized vocational evaluation; or they can be used to categorize an individual student into a specific subgroup based on disability, personality, or level of a specific characteristic such as self-determination. In the realm of transition planning, a number of formal assessments have been used to help guide the process. Achievement tests can assess

- Academic achievement, such as the Woodcock-Johnson III NU Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2007) or the ACT test for college admission (ACT, 2007)
- Adaptive behavior, such as the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Second Edition (Sparrow, Cicchetti, & Balla, 2005)
- Work performance measures, such as the Job Observation and Behavior Scale (Rosenburg & Brady, 2000)

*Achievement tests* that measure academic skills can include the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement—Second Edition (KTEA-2; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004) or the Peabody Individual Achievement Test—Revised—Normative Update (PIAT-R/NU; Markwardt, 1997). These types of assessments are used to gather individual student information related to an academic area such as writing.

*Aptitude tests* can assess the potential to perform academic or other work. They compare how a student's performance on an assessment compares to a normed group that has been successful in the setting or in meeting work expectations. For example, Chris's performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) would be compared to the SAT performance of other students who were successful in academic study at the postsecondary level. These tests are predictors of achievement rather than actual measures of ability. Aptitude tests can assess academic potential, such as success in taking the SAT tests, or general or specific work behaviors, such as the following:

- General work aptitude, as assessed by the Occupational Aptitude Survey and Interest Schedule (Parker, 2002) and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command, 2005)
- Specific work aptitude, as assessed by the Bennett Mechanical Comprehension Test (Bennett, 2006)
- Potential to adjust to work environments, as assessed by Becker's Work Adjustment Profile (Becker, 2000) or the Work Personality Profile (Bolton & Roessler, 2008)
- Match between personality and work environments, as assessed by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985)
- Match between interests and job requirements, as assessed by the Harrington-O'Shea Career Decision-Making System (Harrington & O'Shea, 2000) and the Wide Range Interest and Occupation Test (Glutting & Wilkinson, 2003)

Adaptive behavior and independent living assessments measure the level and amount of support needed and can include the Brigance Life Skills Inventory (Brigance, 1994) or the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales–Second Edition (Vineland II; Sparrow, Cicchetti, & Balla, 2005). These types of assessments would be used to identify any support needs for a particular student in the area of community participation.

Aptitude tests also measure specific abilities, usually in certain vocational areas, and can include the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB; U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command, 2005) or the Occupational Aptitude Survey and Interest Schedule–Third Edition (OASIS-3; Parker, 2002). These assessments can be used to identify areas where a student would be successful in postsecondary education or employment.

Interest inventories measure interests relative to occupational areas and can include the Becker Reading Free Interest Inventory–Revised (Becker, 2000) or the Wide Range Interest-Opinion Test–Revised (WRIOT-R; Glutting & Wilkinson, 2003). A student would take these types of assessments to identify what he or she likes or dislikes as related to a variety of activities or jobs.

Self-determination measures examine a number of component skills (e.g., problem solving, choice making, self-advocacy) and can include the American Institutes for Research (AIR) Self-Determination Scale (Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & StolarSKI, 1994) or the ARC's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995). These scales do just what their names imply by gathering information regarding a student's level of self-determination.

## Resources for Formal Assessments

As stated previously, formal standardized assessments are evaluated based on their reliability, validity, suitability, and objectivity. A number of online resources are available for learning about specific standardized assessment instruments that could be used to match a specific purpose for assessment with a list of possible formal assessment options. The *Mental Measurement's Yearbook* is one such resource that can be accessed through a library's reference section or online through the publisher, Buros, at <http://buros.unl.edu/buros/jsp/search.jsp>. The *Mental Measurement's Yearbook* provides a listing of formal assessments, including the publisher and a review of each assessment (purpose, reliability, validity, and expert analysis of the tests' strengths and weaknesses); it does not provide the actual assessment instrument itself. Another online resource that provides information

specifically about transition assessment instruments is a manual from the Connecticut Department of Education ([http://ctserc.org/transition/transition\\_assessment.pdf](http://ctserc.org/transition/transition_assessment.pdf)).

## INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS

Informal assessments could be curriculum based and are sometimes teacher made. They help to identify areas of strengths and areas of need and include a number of different formats.

*Interviews and questionnaires* help one understand preferences and interests and can include the Dream Sheet (Test, Aspel, & Everson, 2006) and the Enderle-Severson Transition Rating Scales–Third Edition (Enderle & Severson, 2003). Mr. David could gather important information about Michelle or Chris related to their preferences and interests. See Figure 1.2 for a copy of the Dream Sheet.

*Direct observation* is a method used to observe a specific student in a particular setting, such as a job site, classroom, or community. The information about student performance can then be used to identify areas of strengths and areas of need. Observations can be recorded as a narrative of the activities that take place in the setting during the time frame or can be set up as a checklist of specific behaviors that may or may not occur. With a checklist, observers can decide if they want to indicate whether the specific behaviors were observed, or they can record the frequency and/or intensity of the behavior.

*Environmental and situational analysis* is a method that can be used to take a closer look at the environment or situation in which a student will be learning or working and determine whether any modifications and/or accommodations to the environment or situation are necessary to support the success of the individual.

*Curriculum-based assessments* provide a way to determine student performance in reference to a specific curriculum. This information is then used to construct lessons that are specific to an individual student's strengths and needs. Examples of curriculum-based measures that provide information related to transition planning include the Brigance Transition Skills Inventory (Curriculum Associates, 2010) and the Life Centered Education (LCE; CEC, 2012) Transition Curriculum.

*Transitional planning inventories* assess skills needed to transition from school to the community. The information collected from these assessments can be used to plan for postsecondary education, employment, independent living, and community living, and the measures could include the Transition Planning Inventory–Second Edition (Patton & Clark, in press) or the TEACCH Transition Assessment Profile–Second Edition (Mesibov, Thomas, Chapman, & Schopler, 2007). While transition planning inventories and interest inventories are good starting points for transition assessment, the results are dependent on the degree to which a student knows his or her preferences. The more limited the experiences of students, the less valid the results tend to be; therefore, when dealing with students with disabilities who have fewer experiences, it is important that the information collected from these types of assessment be further validated through an in vivo assessment process.

There are obviously a number of informal assessment procedures that can inform transition planning, but how does a teacher or transition coordinator decide which ones to choose? A model proposed by Hughes and Carter (2002; 2012) to identify the purpose



of informal transition assessments can help narrow down the choices by focusing on the purposes of the assessment and using that information to identify assessment strategies that address those purposes. Although originally designed to identify informal and alternative/performance-based assessments, these eight steps could also guide the model for the entire transition assessment process. See Figure 1.3 for the transition assessment model, which uses eight steps to plan transition goals and objectives.

To determine the purpose of the assessment, it is important to know the outcome desired. And of course, by remembering that transition planning is a backward planning/design process, one in which the outcome or end result is identified first, transition coordinators and special educators can ensure that the steps necessary to help the student achieve his or her desired adult outcomes are identified.

## ALTERNATIVE AND/OR PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Alternative and/or performance-based assessments, sometimes defined as informal assessments, involve students demonstrating and/or developing a portfolio or other collection of their work. These assessments, like the other informal assessments already mentioned, are more subjective than formal assessments since they do not involve a set procedure for administering or evaluating the results. However, for the purposes of transition planning, they provide information about a student's ability to perform the required components of a postschool goal such as employment or taking a bus to get to the college campus. While these assessments can yield critically important information, incorporating alternative and/or performance-based assessments requires planning to ensure that these assessments are more than an overwhelming, random collection of information. Performance-based assessments should be clearly focused (remember the purpose of the assessment) and organized in such a way as to provide a picture of student abilities and demonstrate growth over time. In addition to being focused and organized, good performance-based assessments are *authentic*—that is, they require that students “use knowledge in real-world ways, with genuine purposes, audiences, and situational variables” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, p. 337). In addition, it is important to note that these “assessments . . . should teach students (and teachers) what the ‘doing’ of a subject looks like and what kinds of performance challenges are actually considered most important” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, p. 337).

*Portfolios* are collections of student work that, when viewed together, provide a broad view of a student's achievement (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). The artifacts in a portfolio can include samples of student work; copies of evaluations and/or narrative descriptions; resumes; official records; student self-evaluations or reflections; responses from parents,

1. Determine the purpose of the assessment.
2. Identify relevant behaviors and environments.
3. Verify Steps 1 and 2 based on input from student and others important others.
4. Choose appropriate assessment procedures.
5. Modify procedures as needed.
6. Conduct the assessment.
7. Use assessment findings to identify transition goals and objectives.
8. Develop curricular plans to achieve goals.

**Figure 1.3.** Transition Assessment Model. (From Sax, C.L., & Thoma, C.A. [2002]. *Transition assessment: Wise practices for quality lives* [p.55]. Baltimore, MD :Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.; reprinted by permission.)

employers, or other evaluators; and/or audio recordings or photographic records (Thoma & Held, 2002). Portfolios are meant to be portable and can contain electronic or hard copies of the student's work.

*Demonstrations of mastery* are “typically formal, public performances of student competence and skill that provide an opportunity for a summative or final assessment” (Thoma & Held, 2002). Music, art, and vocational education departments typically use this kind of performance-based assessment when students complete a recital, exhibit of their work, or capstone activity at the end of the year. This technique can also be used for shorter-term, formative assessments to provide information about whether a student is mastering the steps of a complex activity such as learning to solve problems or work through an experiment.

*Discourse assessment* provides an opportunity for students to verbally describe what they know rather than write about it. In this type of assessment activity, teachers can not only hear students talk about what they learned but can also gather information about their students' abilities to solve problems, think critically, self-evaluate, and engage in metacognitive tasks (i.e., to think about how they think and learn). An oral exam completed at the end of a class is an example of a discourse assessment, but so is the more informal time that a teacher spends with students to “check in” on their progress.

*Projects* are used frequently in academic classes and serve as opportunities for students to work alone or in groups to tackle question-based assignments. Such activities are often interdisciplinary in nature and provide a chance for students to investigate a question by using a variety of resources and to present their findings in a variety of ways. Projects can be summarized in a written report, a collage or work of art, a multimedia presentation, or a combination of methods.

*Profiles* “are collections of ratings, descriptions, and summary judgments by teachers and others to give a broad view of student achievement” (Thoma & Held, 2002). A summary of performance is a specific example of a profile that can be used by the student to advocate for support and services after high school.

*Evaluating informal and performance-based assessments is an important step in identifying a student's ability to perform given tasks and/or assignments.* When using informal or alternative/performance-based assessments, Mr. David found that it was important to organize the evaluation of student achievement through the use of a rubric. Rubrics provide a description of expected performance, which educators can use to provide direct and immediate feedback. Not only do students learn from the feedback they receive from the use of the rubric in grading performance, but the rubric is also a useful tool in guiding a student's understanding of the required components necessary to demonstrate their mastery. Mr. David found a resource that outlined three steps to follow in developing a grading rubric. (An example of a grading rubric can be found in Table 2.2 of Chapter 2.) Those steps include the following (Spinelli, 2012, p. 379):

1. List the critical components or objectives of the learning activity.
2. Determine the criteria to be used for the evaluation scale.
3. Write a description of expected performance.

## TRANSITION AS A BACKWARD DESIGN PROCESS

Mr. David found a number of references citing the need to start at the end when it comes to transition assessment. He thought of the quotation attributed to Lewis Carroll (n.d.): “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” So identifying the end—the student’s vision for his or her adult life—must be the first step in the transition assessment process. Many assessment strategies can help articulate that broad-based vision, from formal assessments such as the Transition Planning Inventory—Second Edition (Patton & Clark, in press) to informal, curriculum-based assessments such as *Whose Future Is It Anyway?*—Second Edition (Wehmeyer, Lawrence, Kelchner, Palmer, Garner, & Soukup, 2004) or the *Choicemaker Curriculum* (Martin et al., 2007), to alternative/performance-based assessments such as projects or portfolios that describe a student’s vision for adult life. In addition to these assessments, planning strategies such as person-centered planning or student-directed IEP processes can provide an opportunity for a student and his or her transition team to articulate a common vision for the student’s postschool outcomes.

Once that common vision is identified, the rest of the transition assessment process can identify the team’s current information about the student that has an impact on transition planning, as well as the information still needed to identify concrete transition IEP goals, supports, and services. Mr. David found a planning and summary tool he could use to document transition assessment information and results for each student. This tool is found in the Learning Styles Inventory—Results Page (see Figure 1.4) as a blank document. A completed example—as well as steps for using this information to identify annual transition IEP goals—can be found in Chapter 8.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the transition assessment process, beginning with an understanding of the legal requirements under IDEA 2004 and a description of the three kinds of assessment procedures that will be described throughout this book. Three purposes for transition assessment data were described, including the determination of a student’s vision for the future, his or her strengths and needs, and eligibility for services from various adult service agencies. In addition, the chapter introduced Mr. David and two students, Chris and Michelle, whose experiences navigating the transition assessment process will be shared throughout this book. Both Michelle and Chris will need very different assessments, and using their examples throughout this book will provide an opportunity to learn about different approaches to the types of assessments (formal, informal, performance based/alternative) within each of the different transition domains (employment, postsecondary education, community living, etc.). Unfortunately, this book will not be able to provide examples of every assessment strategy or instrument that exists—nor will it be able to provide examples of how these strategies will work for students who have needs that differ from those of Michelle and Chris—but the combination of concrete examples, tips and strategies, frameworks for organizing your transition assessment efforts, and resource lists of tools and web-based resources should provide a solid foundation for your work.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC): <http://www.nsttac.org>.

This resource provides an annotated bibliography of transition assessment tools and resources.

Iowa Model for Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment: <http://transitionassessment.northcentralrrc.org/iowaModel.aspx>.

This resource includes questions that help guide choosing appropriate transition assessments.

National High School Center at American Institutes for Research: <http://www.betterhighschools.org>.

This resource includes guidelines for using data to determine whether students are prepared for colleges and careers.