

WHY ASSESSMENT?



A big part of the transition process of preparing for life after high school includes assessment. Assessment is an ongoing process of collecting information. It provides a baseline or starting point for transition. It helps us identify where we are at right now and what is needed to reach our goal. Think of it like a GPS system. A GPS system is only useful if you have information to feed into it, such as your current address and the address you want to go to. A transition plan will only be successful if we know the current status of the student, what he/she is able to do and where he/she wants to go in life (i.e. goals). Schools now **MUST** do assessments as part of transition planning. First, to see if the student is on the right track and that his/her life goal is realistic and reachable. Next, assessments give us skill data, what the student is able to do and what they need to work on. From here, we build the transition plan and begin the work to prepare the student for a successful life after high school.

There are many types of assessments. Teachers gather data year round and should be able to provide current assessment data on reading, writing and math levels. You will want to compare your child's educational levels to other students his age to see if or what the gaps may be. Other information such as Preferences, Interests, Needs and Strengths will be gathered (i.e. easy way to remember this is PINS). You can gather information on preferences through checklists by looking at personality traits, likes and dislikes, etc. (ex: enjoys working alone, not in groups, etc.). Interests can point towards a future career or training in college. Some students can tell you what field they are interested in while others may have no idea. Checklists, online games and activities, interviews, questionnaires and even an on site job assessment can be helpful. Needs and strengths have always been listed on the IEP so they are a little easier to identify. Current assessment data also provides the present levels of performance on the IEP. Transition is so important it has it own pages as part of the IEP and should drive what work and services need to be provided as part of the IEP for that student.

It is always recommended to use multiple assessments on an ongoing basis. Formal assessment should compare the student to other students his age (schools call these norm referenced and criterion referenced) and look at specific skills (including employment and living) and academic areas. It uses a specific way to give, score and interpret testing.

Informal assessments look at student performance over time and allow information to be collected from a variety of people (such as parents, employers, teachers, etc.). It does not compare the results to other students. It only gives us information on one student. Observations are a great informal assessment as well as checklists, interviews and questionnaires. Again, formal and informal assessments are both necessary.

No matter what type of assessment, the goal is to be able to answer the follow questions for the student:



- Who am I?
- What do I want in life, now and in the future?
- What are the main barriers to getting what I want in the future?
- What are my options now and in the future?