Using Group Discovery as an Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment

Overview Group Discovery as a Classroom Tool
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Transition Assessment

The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children defines transition assessment as an:

• ongoing process of collecting data on the individual’s needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments.

• Assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)” (p. 70-71)
What the Federal Law Requires

• “appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills” (§300.320[b][1])
Selecting an Assessment

- There are numerous assessments:
Assessment for individuals with more significant disabilities:

- Situational or, observational assessment, structured interviews, personal-future planning activities, and functional skill inventories.

- Discovery is an assessment that looks at when a student is at his or her best.
Assessments Need to Answer

- Who is the student?
- When is he or she at their best?
- What threads can be built on to secure employment that fits the student?
- What needs to be learned now and in the future?
- What are some of the conditions that need to be in place for the student to succeed?
- What are the tasks he/she enjoys doing?
- What tasks does he or she do away from school?
- What can be learned from individuals who know the student well?
- What type of volunteer experience or work experience can help the student understand the options that interest him or her, in school and community?
- What is his or her routine?
Why Discovery?

Traditional Labor Market Doesn’t work for many people:

• Send resume / fill out application
• Meet the employer’s qualifications or present yourself as if you can
• Hope to get the job

It’s tough to compete if you’re not the perfect match.
Two Distinct Approaches to Employment

Labor Market Employment: Responding to the needs of employers with applicants who are “qualified” to meet those general needs.

Customized Employment: Discovering the “strengths, needs and interests” of applicants and negotiating a job description that meets both the applicant’s and employer’s specific needs.

Group Discovery is an assessment process that helps students learn what their strengths, needs, contributions and interests are in relationship to work.
Limitations of Labor Market Approaches

For the employer: Many tasks are often bundled into one job description so the employer either overpays or misses the opportunity for good employees.

For Students: Even after doing all the right things as a jobseeker they still might not be selected.

The message is unless a student can compete they do not fit any of the employer’s needs.
Believing is Seeing

- Students, their families, and their teachers need to be able to picture the students working in order to believe they can.
- If the student’s supports do not believe he or she can work they will graduate without employment.
- Group Discovery creates a vision for students and their families.
Group Discovery

• Takes the format that is followed by a job seeker and a professional in one-on-one Discovery and applies it to a group setting.

• The person uses the group for feedback and understanding of the concepts.

• Discovery activities are self directed by the job seeker with support from the teacher and group.

• The person uses the group for feedback, support and understanding of the concepts.
Group Discovery Starts with the Student

- Students learn what they need to be successful, what contributions they have to offer, their interests, and conditions for employment.

- It looks at what tasks students can perform and would like to perform for money.

- Provides ideas about employers who have the tasks students are looking to perform.
Unbundling Demand

Customized Employment allows employers to “unbundle” demand into tasks and to take advantage of discrete competencies.

Many students with complex lives often don’t have the “whole package” to offer but do have competencies to offer. Group Discovery identifies those competencies.

Discovery can help students understand what they do have to offer an employer.
In Group Discovery...

- Students identify when they are at their best.
- Strengths and interests they would like to use on a worksite.
- Interview people who know the student well.
- Think about tasks they want to perform on a job site.
- Learn the importance of their routine.
- What employers have needs for the tasks the student is interested in performing?
- What does the student need to be successful?
Discovery allows students to start thinking about what they need to know to find the right employment setting.

- **Education**
- **Learning style**
- **Routines**
- **Responsibilities**
- **Hobbies**
- **Transportation**
- **Interest Areas**
- **Complexities**
- **Financial Needs**
- **Skills they have and ones needed**

What they need to be successful.
How Group Discovery Results in Employment Options

In the Discovery Group students clarify:

Conditions, Interests, Contributions and Tasks.

Upon completion of Discovery, teachers can use this information to arrange for work experiences that meet students’ conditions and contributions.
Are you concerned that employers are not willing?

Customized Employment Is a “Win/Win” Strategy that Meets the Needs of Employers As Well As Job Seekers.
Unmet Needs in the Workplace

All workplaces have unmet needs, even when fully staffed.
Meeting Unmet Needs

Excess data entry

Assisting during heavy receptionist calling

Relieving employees during breaks

Performing episodic duties: collating for meeting

Employers can turn each unmet need into a task.

Augmenting low producing employees
Everyone Customizes…

Most employees, soon after landing a “competitive job”, begin subtly customizing the features of that job to meet their individual needs.

Customized Employment simply seeks to start the process before the job is developed, in upfront negotiations with employers.
Customized Employment

- Group Discovery creates an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the student with a disability,

- Which is then used to create work experiences that are related to the student’s conditions and contributions.

- In older students it can create the option of meeting the specific needs of the employer for paid employment.
Group Discovery Will Provide Information on:

1. Understanding who students are in relationship to work.
2. Students’ conditions for success.
3. Using interests and contributions to find the right work experiences.
4. Employers who can use students’ contributions.
5. Summarizing the information that can be used in planning.
Details of Group Discovery

• The homework is designed to direct and assist the job seeker in moving through the steps of Discovery.

• In order for Group Discovery to be a successful approach the student must:
  • Be comfortable in groups and be willing to participate
  • Be able to stay focused for at least 30 minutes
  • Be willing to do the required homework
  • Group Discovery is for an hour to an hour and a half once a week for six weeks.
  • Can be conducted in a resource room or classroom.
Sample of Areas to be Covered in Group Discovery

- Session One – each session is very interactive
  - The Discovery process
  - Different components of work
  - Thinking about when you are at your best
  - The difference between skills and tasks
  - Your Contributions

- Homework for session one
  - Talk to at least one person and have them describe you.
  - Decide if you agreed with what they said
  - Bring back a list of your contributions
Session Two

- Creating belief that you can work competitively
- Why routines matter
- Money and work
- Employers in your neighborhood
Homework for Session Two

• Track your routines on the chart provided in the homework sheets.
• You are going to want to be able to answer the following questions:
  • Best part of your day/week
  • Most challenging part of your day/week
  • What upsets you?
  • What do you look forward to and why during the week?
  • How do you wake up in the morning?
  • When are you the most engaged during the week?
  • Is there anything you need assistance with?
Session Three

• Conditions
• Interests

• Homework
  • Make a list of your Conditions
  • Prioritize them
  • Be able to tell the group next week why you chose those Conditions
  • Bring in a list of your Interests next week
Other Topics Covered

- Type of supervisor the student needs to be successful
- Creating an “elevator speech”
- Learning styles
- Accommodations
- Disclosure
- Informational Interviews
- What the student needs to do to stay healthy
Recap

• Group Discovery is an effective tool.
• The information learned in Group Discovery can be used as part of an age-appropriate assessment.
• It can inform where to arrange work-based learning for the student.
• It is a flexible approach that can be conducted annually to inform work experiences as the student ages.
• Based on the students’ experiences and age, the topics can be modified.
• The support of the group is an effective tool in helping students see possibilities for themselves.
If you are interested in participating in a virtual learning community around Group Discovery, please indicate this on your webinar evaluation!
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