

**Community-Based Vocational Assessments:**

Why they are important to the IEP

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**What is a Community-Based Vocational Assessment?**

- "An *organized*, comprehensive collection of information regarding a student's interests, abilities, aptitudes, and special needs (accommodations). It is *on-going*, adjusting to a student's changing interests and ideas."

from *Vocational Assessment and Its Role in Transition*, 2002

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- It is strength-based and student-centered
- It takes place **in the community**
- It takes into account the student's language, culture, and family
- Can begin as early as 14 years old

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Includes the use of **formal** and **informal** methods and is shared at the IEP

- o Interest inventories
- o Student interviews
- o Parent interviews
- o Skills and aptitude tests
- o Situational assessments (both on- and off-campus)
- o Work samples
- o Vocational evaluations
- o Performance in career related courses

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Why are CBVAs important?

- o Students emerge from the vocational assessment process **with increased self-awareness** and a better understanding of **their skills**.
- o Helps students, parents and teachers develop individualized education and vocational services to reach career goals.

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Vocational Assessment Pyramid



- o Illinois State Board of Education, Vocational Assessment of Secondary Special Needs Students, 1998

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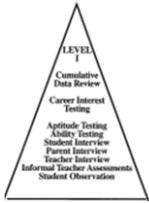
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### Level 1



- Goal – to identify student's interests, aptitudes, and skills in order to plan long-term goals.
- Process – reviewing and compiling all pre-existing student information into a format that is useful for vocational planning.
- Responsibility – In most schools, it is a member of the child study team, such as the special education teacher, transition coordinator or guidance counselor.

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### Level 2



- Goal – to provide a more in-depth, hands-on, performance-based assessment
- Process – assess learning styles, values, maturity, and overall job readiness using cumulative data review and some work samples
- Responsibility – mainly school staff, but can include specialists from an outside agency

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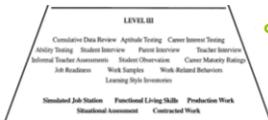
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### Level 3



- Goal – a very detailed, comprehensive, hands-on evaluation of skills, behaviors, and interests
- Process – conducted in a community-based setting, to include actually job-site performance as well as the assessment of functional living skills
- Responsibility – almost always overseen by specialists from an outside agency

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## Vocational Assessment Terms

- o **Career Exploration** – exposure to the nature and requirements of jobs, both informational and hands-on, including:
  - o **Job Shadowing** – on-site experiences in a particular occupation or industry
  - o **Informational Interviewing** – meetings and conversations with workers in a particular occupation or industry
- o **Situational Assessment** – behavioral observation of the student in a controlled work situation, which may include
  - o **Simulated Work Experience** – an imitated work experiences that may be located within the school or at a rehabilitation agency

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- o **Community Work Experience** – a time-limited learning experience at a community business site where the student is exposed to actual work responsibilities, designed to evaluate skills and behaviors in a real-world setting
  - o Also known as **Job Sampling**
  - o Side note: this is what the majority of Project HIRE's Transition Services program entails

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- o **Job Matching and Job Placement** – this usually occurs after graduation, but can occur while the student is still enrolled in school, and is the process by which a student's demonstrated skills, aptitudes, and interests are aligned with matching jobs
- o **Competitive Employment** – a job in which the person is hired, supervised and paid by the employer, while working alongside non-disabled peers
  - o **Supported Employment** – individualized services for people with disabilities, including the availability of a job coach, and work-place accommodations
  - o **Accommodations** – may be simple like color-coding materials, or more complex such as individually designed job duties or assistive technologies

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### How to determine who needs what and why?

- All students on an IEP should receive **at least** a Level 1 assessment
- Ideally, all students would receive a Level 3 assessment, but personnel and financial limitations in many school districts prevent this
- **Always advocate for more service!** As the saying goes, "The squeaky wheels gets the grease..."

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### How to determine when?

- Many aspects of a CBVA demand a certain amount of social and emotional maturity from the student, such as time management, co-worker relations, financial responsibility, etc.
- For this reason, most off-campus experiences only occur after the age of 16
- However, on-campus inventories, interviews and assessments should still begin at age 14

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### How teachers benefit:

- Information from the assessment(s) should form the basis for transition planning in the IEP, and may even contribute to educational goals as well
- Certain instructional strategies may emerge as being more appropriate for a student

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### How students benefit:

- The vocational assessment process assists students in identifying and understanding their interests and strengths
- It can help clarify the relationship between classwork and success after school
- This can greatly increase student interest, motivation and involvement!
- Can help identify accommodations that might be necessary after graduation

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### How the vocational assessment relates to the IEP:

- Vocational assessments provide information about present level of performance
- This information can be used to set long-term goals and short-term objectives
- Student input is vital to the vocational assessment and is therefore very relevant to the IEP

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### How to use information from assessments to develop goals and objectives:

- **Help** determine remedial needs
- **Help** identify the need for modified instructional materials
- **Help** identify the need for other support services, including adaptations of curriculum, methods of instruction, equipment and facilities
- **Help** provide a data base for guidance and counseling and career development

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### Peter Smith

Peter has been receiving special education services since birth in an Early Intervention program. He has been diagnosed as Developmentally Delayed, with weaknesses in expressive language. He takes medication for seizures and has not had one since the middle of eighth grade. He enrolled in a public school in Kindergarten and was included in the regular classroom for some of his subjects. He is now at the high school in a self-contained classroom for academic subjects and is included in all non-academic subjects. He receives adaptive Phys. Ed.

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### Case Study: Peter

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