

Federal special education law (i.e., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004) requires Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of transition-aged youth with disabilities to include postsecondary goals describing where students would like to work, learn, and live after high school (Martin & McConnell, 2017). To discover the interests, skills, and needs to create postsecondary goals, federal special education law also requires educators to use transition assessments (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). The law does not differentiate the transition assessment requirement for students with different skills – the law simply states transition assessment results must be used to develop postsecondary goals. Simply put, special educators must use transition assessments to help write the IEPs of all students with disabilities of transition age regardless of the disability or its severity.

## What are Illustrated and Video Career Interest Assessments?

According to the CareerOneStop website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor an interest assessment enables individuals to identify careers matching one's interest. These tools typically ask users to identify if they like or do not like certain job-related tasks or activities. The assessment results match the results to various careers. Most interest inventories require reading skills, but these are of little use for transition-age students with limited or no understanding of written text. Rather than words, illustrated and video career assessments use drawings, photos, or videos of actual jobs. Users “read” the illustration and pictures or watch brief videos, then mark their preferences.

## What the Research Says

To fulfill the federal special education law's transition assessment requirement, students with

disabilities need to meaningfully participate in the transition assessment process (Collier et al., 2016). To do this, assessment materials need to be presented to students in a manner understandable to them (Martin & Zhang, 2020). Students with disabilities, including those with severe intellectual disability and extensive support needs, have distinct preferences, thus the assessment process needs to be structured so students can make informed choices and decisions (Lohrmann-O'Rourke et al., 2000). Shevin and Klein (1984) defined choice as “an individual's selection of preferred alternatives from among several familiar options” (p. 160).

Opportunities for informed choice often do not happen for students with disabilities who have limited or no understanding of written text. Instead, family members or others who know students well are asked to state students' vocational preferences. This results in student voices not being heard. Martin et al. (2005) showed the fallacy of using others to determine student choice in a study demonstrating individuals with severe intellectual disability with limited to no reading skills could reliably select their own vocational preferences when given an opportunity to do so. Researchers asked primary caregivers to rank order employment settings, tasks, and job characteristics that a student with a disability would like the best. Next, students selected what they liked best across pairs of brief videos. The videos depicted different job sites, tasks, and various job characteristics. After watching all the videos several times and confirming top choices, the researchers compared the matches made by caregivers and those made by students. The researchers found a 6% match between the top choice caregivers indicated the students would like and what students actually picked. When the preference range was expanded to the top three choices, a 29% match existed between what the caregivers identified as the students' top three choices and what the students actually chose.

## Guidelines for Practice

The moral from the Martin et al. (2005) study is obvious - special educators need to engage students in the transition assessment process and use assessment materials students can understand. This means that before asking students to complete an interest inventory educators need to know if students can read and understand the words or pictures. If not, then another assessment needs to be picked or students will need to be coached through the assessment with the educator presenting and then explaining each choice.

## Additional Resources

### Picture Interest Career Survey

[www.impactpublications.com/product/picture-interest-career-survey-2nd-edition/](http://www.impactpublications.com/product/picture-interest-career-survey-2nd-edition/)

### Pictorial Interest Inventory

[www.cves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Pictorial-Interest-Inventory-template-SHEN.pdf](http://www.cves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Pictorial-Interest-Inventory-template-SHEN.pdf)

### Pictorial Interest Inventory – Clip Art Version

[www.cves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PictureCareerInterest-Inventory.pdf](http://www.cves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PictureCareerInterest-Inventory.pdf)

### Self-Directed Employment

#### Downloadable Pictures

Use these to make own assessment tools.

[archive.brookespublishing.com/picturebank/](http://archive.brookespublishing.com/picturebank/)

### Self-Directed Supported Employment book

[archive.brookespublishing.com/picturebank/](http://archive.brookespublishing.com/picturebank/)

### Career Clusters Videos

[www.careeronestop.org/videos/careervideos/career-videos.aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/videos/careervideos/career-videos.aspx)

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