

# Postsecondary Education Interests and Skills Assessment

Federal special education law requires Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to develop postsecondary education or training goals for transition-age youth, in addition to employment goals, and as needed, independent living goals (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). The addition of postsecondary education or training goals came about in part because far too many students with disabilities did not transition into postsecondary educational programs who could have done so (Madaus et al., 2013). To develop postsecondary education, employment, and independent living goals, federal law requires educators to use transition assessments to identify transition strengths and needs (Martin & McConnell, 2017).

## What are Postsecondary Education Interests and Skills Assessments?

Numerous assessments, such as the ACT or annual academic achievement tests, exist to identify students' academic skill strengths and needs. Only a few assessments exist to identify non-academic postsecondary education interests and skills, and two of these are described below.

- The Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness consists of 25 items to examine college readiness across academic skills, self-understanding, self-advocacy, executive functioning, and motivation and confidence. Parents or educators, and students complete the tool together. The process and results provide information to ponder in making the decision to attend a traditional academic oriented two or four-year postsecondary college or university. No validity evidence exists to support using this assessment, so it needs to be considered an informal assessment.
- The Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment evaluates skills of students considering alternative postsecondary education programs on college campuses. It is designed for

transition-age students with more significant support needs, such as an intellectual disability or autism. Assessment items come from an analysis of application requirements, which experts validated. The assessment consists of 71 questions across 12 domains including navigation and safety, independent living, self-determination, health and wellness, and interpersonal skills. IEP team members use the results to identify a student's existing skills and those the student needs to learn prior to submitting an application. Limited validity evidence exists, so this needs to be considered an informal assessment.

## What the Research Says

Preparation for post-secondary academic or experience-based educational programs involves assessing, teaching, and providing experiences that enable students to learn needed skills. To prepare students, Martin et al. (2003) suggested IEP teams:

- Identify needed non-academic skills associated with admission into desired postsecondary education program.
- Teach students needed skills and provide critical experiences needed in desired postsecondary education programs.
- Develop a post-secondary education goal matching students' interests and skills.

Because so few secondary transition assessments with ample supporting validity evidence exist, educators often must use informal assessments with little to no supporting validity evidence to assist in post-secondary transition planning (Martin, 2013). The Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness tool lacks ample supporting validity evidence, so it must be considered an informal assessment. The Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment has strong content validity because its items come directly from applications used by

programs across the country. This tool still needs additional evidence to be considered an assessment with ample supporting validity evidence. Based upon Prince et al.'s (2014) recommendation derived from federal district court findings, if educators use one or more transition assessments with ample validity evidence as part of a student's transition assessment battery, the IEP team can use the Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness or the Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment to assist with decision making and identification of strengths and needs as long as another assessment with ample validity evidence is also used.

### Guidelines for Practice

Conversation between students, parents, and educators unlock the benefits of using both the Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness and The Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment. As parents or educators complete the Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness with their students, they discuss each item and possible results. Use of this tool provides three useful benefits. First, it will issue an overall score with guidelines on interpreting the results. Second, users gain a better understanding of students' current skills and what needs to be learned to attain the desired postsecondary education outcome. Third, educators may include assessment results (i.e., strengths, needs, overall summary score) in students' IEPs. Talking about each item and discussing the meaning of the overall score may solidify students' existing postsecondary goals or provide the opportunity to alter them.

Unlike the Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness, the Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment instructions exclude students from completing the assessment as it is designed to be completed by the teacher and parent. After completing the tool, however, educators and parents may review the results with students and solicit student input. Completing the Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment provides students and parents the opportunity to learn skills

needed to attend a postsecondary college experience program. When completed, the results of the assessment may prompt completion of an actual postsecondary experience education program application. Alternatively, after reviewing results, students and family members may decide on a different postsecondary outcome. As with all transition assessments, educators may pull strengths and needs from the assessment results to include in their students' IEPs.

### Additional Resources

#### Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness

[nextsteps-nh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/college-readiness\\_assessment-Landmark-Guide.pdf](https://nextsteps-nh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/college-readiness_assessment-Landmark-Guide.pdf)

#### The Postsecondary Education and Experience Assessment

[andrealsuk.wixsite.com/peaeassessment](https://andrealsuk.wixsite.com/peaeassessment)

#### Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness

*The College Readiness Assessment is an educator-modified version of the Landmark Guide to Assessing College Readiness. It looks similar to the Landmark Guide, and it contains an additional five items to assess the added Postsecondary Education construct. Many educators believe these additional items make this a more useful transition assessment.*

[www.suu.edu/trioets/documents/1617college-readiness-assessment.pdf](https://www.suu.edu/trioets/documents/1617college-readiness-assessment.pdf)

#### Transition Assessment and Goal Generator

[tagg.ou.edu/tagg/](https://tagg.ou.edu/tagg/)

### References

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