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An Overview of the Discovery Process in Florida

This training was developed by the Project 10: Transition Education Network, a special project funded by the Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B.

Status Check



What do you currently know about the Discovery process?

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Objectives

After this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Define the Discovery process
- Specify the benefits of implementing the Discovery process
- Describe the seven main steps to facilitating the Discovery process in Florida schools
- Identify available resources

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Person-Centered Planning



The Discovery process is built on the concept of honoring students with a disability by ensuring the focus remains on them.

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What is Discovery?

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What is Discovery?

Discovery is

- A process that involves getting to know students, or helping them get to know themselves before we help them plan
- Spending time with students as a means of finding the conditions where they are their best
- A practical strategy to determine complexities and preferences

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What is Discovery?

Discovery is

- A way to identify the unique contributions offered by those who might not compete as well as others (not comparative or competitive)
- Getting to know students in settings where they are most who they are
- Not a plan, but the foundation of employment planning, that seeks to customize outcomes
- Compatible with self-determination and individual choice

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The Discovery Process vs. Traditional Assessment

- Discovery seeks to identify **already-existing information** rather than developing information solely for the purposes of evaluation or diagnosis.
- The Discovery process identifies a direction for employment that is based on **information obtained from the person's entire life** and not from an instance of performance.

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The Discovery Process vs. Traditional Assessment

- The Discovery process focuses more on **ecological validity** than **predictive validity**. It is more important that the direction to employment makes sense in relation to a person's life than to attempt to predict success based on test performance.
- The information from the Discovery process will **never** be used to systematically exclude a person from employment.



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The Discovery Process vs. Traditional Assessment

- The profile strategy seeks to **empower and involve students, their families, and friends** rather than to exclude them.
- Natural, common sense approaches to employment are given priority over strategies which rely solely on professional judgment, or results from traditional assessments.



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Information Gathered Through the Discovery Process

May be utilized for:

- Exploring community activities
- Developing work experiences
- Identifying available supports
- Job development—**Customized Employment** (wage positions and/or self-employment)
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) planning



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Definition of Customized Employment

Customized employment is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Customized Employment utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development — one person at a time . . . one employer at a time.

(United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d.)

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Status Check



- What type of assessments are currently being accessed for students with the most significant disabilities?
- Who collects the information? How is it obtained?
- Is the information gathered comprehensive (e.g. multiple environments)? Holistic?

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“The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better.”

-Robert F. Kennedy

Getting to Know Chelsea



Video included in *Let's Get Everyone to Work! Transition Toolkit for Students and Families*: <http://www.fddc.org/publications>

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Why Consider Discovery?

Traditional vocational evaluations may not capture the strengths, skills, interests, preferences, needs, and ideal working conditions of a student with complex life issues.



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Benefits of Discovery Experienced In Florida

Benefits include:

- Changes in team members' perspectives in regards to the focus student's strengths, skills, interests, and support needs
- A more comprehensive understanding of students by agency representatives
- Identified support needs, accommodations, and direction for employment planning

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Benefits of Discovery Experienced In Florida

Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) have incorporated new information gathered through the Discovery process, including:

- Successful learning strategies
- Interests, preferences, skills, and capacities
- Supports available and level of support needed in different situations
- Desired postsecondary outcomes

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Building a Complete Picture

Ellen Condon reminds us:

- We think we know someone, but it is based upon the context in which we got to know them.
- We must validate what we think we know, and observe in new contexts to gain a complete picture.

(Condon, 2012, slide 31)



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Activity in Pairs



Ask your partner:
Under what conditions are you at your best?

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Identifying Conditions

▪ The Discovery process identifies conditions which may support student success.

▪ It's important to consider which work conditions are *ideal* for the student; such as:

- Scheduling
- Physical environment
- Transportation/Location
- Social aspects
- Supports/Strategies

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Steps in Discovery

- 1 • Identify the Student
- 2 • Identify Discovery Team Members
- 3 • Discuss with the Family
- 4 • Visit to the Home
- 5 • Conduct Interviews and Observations
- 6 • Document the Information
- 7 • Create Representational Portfolio/Visual Resume

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Team Facilitator Responsibilities

- Once the student is identified (**Step 1**), form student-specific Discovery team (**Step 2**)
- Ensure the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) understand the Discovery process; and complete necessary forms (**Step 3**)
- Coordinate the visit to the home (**Step 4**)
- Coordinate scheduling of interviews and observations (**Step 5**)

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Team Facilitator Responsibilities

- Compile information gathered from interviews, observations, and record review(s) and transfer information to Florida Discovery Student Profile (**Steps 5 and 6**)
- Ensure the student's Representational Portfolio/Visual Resume is completed (**Step 7**)
- *Schedule and facilitate the student's Customized Employment Planning Meeting (identify person to follow up on action plan)*

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Step 1

Identify the Student

The Discovery process may be used with everyone; however, it is especially useful in situations where a student's skills, abilities, interests, and ideal working conditions have **not** been captured through traditional transition assessment.



Step 2

Identify Discovery Team Members

The Discovery process is a group effort which is student-focused. Team members may include:

- Student (required)
- Family members
- School personnel
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) Support Coordinator
- Representatives of community-based organizations
- Others who know the individual well

Step 2

Identify Discovery Team Members

Typically school-based, team members may include:

- Transition Specialist
- Teacher(s)
- Counselor
- Social Worker
- Job Developer/Job Coach/Employment Specialist
- Paraprofessional
- Other support personnel

Step 3

Discuss with the Family

- Ensure the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) understand the Discovery process
- Have parent(s)/legal guardian(s) complete basic forms, such as:
 - Release of Information
 - Photo Release
 - Other district specific forms



Step 4

Visit to the Home



- Schedule a time to visit the student and his/her family at their home.
- If the family is not comfortable with someone from the Discovery team coming to their home, determine a mutually agreed upon location in the community to meet instead (e.g. a coffee shop, diner, library, etc.).

Step 4

Visit to the Home

The visit with the family is an opportunity to find out more about the student's:

- Home routines
- Responsibilities at home (chores)
- Family activities
- Hobbies and/or activities the individual particularly likes
- Activities in which the student is at his/her best
- Work experience(s)
- Support needs, including the use of technology
- Supports and services available
- Health concerns

Step 4

Visit to the Home

Ask the student and family about individuals who know the student well.

Responses might include:

- Service providers
- Employers
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Other family members
- School personnel
- Church Members



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Step 5

Conduct Interviews and Observations

- Interview the individuals identified as knowing the student well.
- Observe the student in situations in which he/she is at his/her best (taking into consideration level of independence and interest/motivation).
- Review student records (after interviews and observations are completed).

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Beyond Asking

Asking works for some of the people some of the time. However,

- Different people can ask the same question to a student and get different answers.
- People often tell us what they think we want to hear.
- The same person can ask a student the same question, at different times, and get different answers.
- People may not have an accurate, thoughtful response to answer important questions such as "What do you want to do for work?"

(Callahan, Marc Gold and Associates, n.d., slide 69)

Features of Task Observation

When observing tasks, be on the look out for the following:

- Motivation or preference indicated
- Supports offered/used
- General Performance— pace, correctness,
- consistency, stamina
- Ability to transfer skills
- Concerns
- Items that may merit additional exploration

(Callahan, Marc Gold and Associates, n.d., slide 76)

Descriptive Writing Tips

- Capture what the student can do, not what he/she cannot do
- Note concerns objectively, and with evidence
- Clearly define supports needed



Step 6

Document the Information

Data collected will be documented on the **Florida Discovery Student Profile**.

Please note:

- One person is usually responsible for maintaining the Student Profile
- Information can be added as it is gathered
- Student Profiles are updated quarterly (as a best practice)



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Florida Discovery Student Profile

Sections of the Florida Discovery Student Profile include:

1. Information From the Home
2. Information for the Portfolio/Visual Résumé
3. Interviews and Observations
4. Additional Skills
5. Record Review
6. Additional Information



Step 7 Create Representational Portfolio/Visual Résumé

- A representational portfolio/visual resume provides an overview of who the person is through pictures and narrative.
- Information and pictures gathered should be included in the representational portfolio/visual resume.
- Update information at least quarterly.

NOTE: Representational Portfolios/Visual Resumes are independent documents from the *Florida Discovery Student Profile*.

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Developing a Visual Representational Portfolio

Visual representational portfolios may be used in a variety of situations, such as:

- At IEP and other transition planning meetings
- During introductions
- When interviewing for school and community-based programs



Including Pictures

Throughout the process obtain pictures which:

- Showcase the student's strengths, skills, and interests
- Portray successful support strategies
- Depict the student's life in a variety of settings
 - Video recordings may also be utilized to capture activities



What is a Visual Résumé?

A Visual Résumé is a tool for introducing a job seeker to a prospective employer that showcases the best aspects of the student.

It includes photographs and narrative information about the student, such as:

- Skills
- Abilities
- Work experience(s)
- Supports
- Employment-related tasks
- Potential contributions



Planning the Visual Résumé

Visual résumés should be approximately 10-12 pages; therefore, it is critical to be selective regarding information included.

Involve the family and student in deciding which images are the most powerful, what information to share, and how best to display the information.



Visual résumé Walk-through

Please take out the Project 10 Visual Résumé template

Student's Full Name

This slide should...

- Include a picture depicting the student working (or another competency-based activity)
- Introduce the student, some ideas include:
 - School/program
 - Graduation (or expected graduation) date
 - Current position, if applicable
 - Town/City where student resides



Tips

- Don't overcrowd the slides with pictures
- Pair narrative information with photos
- Keep it simple (words and format)
- Use professional business language
- Tailor each visual résumé presentation to the particular type of job
- Avoid using "is able to..." and instead use action verbs (see next slide)



Representational Portfolio and Visual Résumé Presentation

The portfolio may be shared electronically (e.g. through a computer or iPad); or a stand-up presentation binder. A standard three-ring binder with sheet protectors could also be used.



Representational Portfolio and Visual Résumé Presentation

- It is suggested to print two sets of the portfolio/ résumé—one set in color to display, and another in black and white (with notes if needed) for the student to use as a guide when presenting.
- It is also recommended to have available a traditional résumé to leave with the employer.



The Journey Takes Time, but the Results are Invaluable

The graphic shows the word "SUCCESS" in large, colorful, 3D block letters. A green arrow points upwards from the letters, symbolizing growth and achievement.

Project 10 Discovery Process Training Series

- Part I: Overview and Implementation of the Discovery Process in Florida
- Part II: Developing Florida Discovery Student Profiles, Representational Portfolios, and Visual Résumés
- Part III
 - A: The Customized Employment/Work Experience Planning Meeting
 - B: Job Development and Customized Employment

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Project 10 Resources



- Effective Practices and Student Development
<http://www.project10.info/Taxonomy.php>
- Person-Centered Planning
<http://www.project10.info/DetailPage.php?MainPageID=103>

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Resources

- Marc Gold and Associates
 - White Papers
<http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/whitepapers.html>
 - Discovery Series
<http://www.marcgold.com/>
 - Charting the Course to Employment
 - Capturing the Information of Discovery
 - Customized Plan for Employment
- Rural Institute at the University of Montana
 - Discovery
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Discovery.asp>

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Resources

- Southeast Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE)
 - Archived webinars on Discovery and Customized Employment
<http://www.tacesoutheast.org/archives.php?year=2012>
- United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy
 - Customized Employment web page (includes customized employment videos)
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/CustomizedEmployment.htm>

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Questions and Thank You!

Questions, concerns, or recommendations?

Thank you for your attendance and input today!

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