

EVALUATION OF PREVOCATIONAL SKILLS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT: There is an increasing demand among employers for workers to demonstrate proper prevocational related concepts prior to entering the world of work. This is particularly true of students who have limited academic abilities and thus may have difficulty acquiring needed technical information. This article will outline the more critical prevocational skills, indicate methods of assessment in a vocational evaluation situation, and remediation in special education settings.

Vocational evaluations of handicapped students in school settings are becoming increasingly popular nationwide. These evaluations usually take place in the ninth or tenth grades and can greatly assist in determining occupational preferences, individual learning styles, and vocational aptitude levels. Because of this, school officials can, by means of the I.E.P. process, determine vocational placement alternatives in the least restrictive environment. This process can also be extremely helpful for devising methods of providing feedback to instructional staff concerning concepts typically defined as prevocational skills. This article will list some of the most common prevocational skills and suggest methods for their assessment and dissemination to special education instructional staff.

What are Prevocational Skills?

Prevocational skills may be defined as the battery of traits, qualities, and attitudes typically desired of employees in working situations. This does not include the more complex technical skills a person may acquire in vocational training programs or through experience in a specific occupation. Listed below are some of the more commonly indicated prevocational skills based upon employer interviews and industrial surveys.

- 1) Punctuality
- 2) Attendance
- 3) Respect of supervision
- 4) Work quality
- 5) Neatness
- 6) Attending to task
- 7) Organization of work
- 8) Getting along with others
- 9) Occupational awareness
- 10) Physical conditioning and health
- 11) Following instructions
- 12) Maintaining an even disposition
- 13) Basic communication skills
- 14) Clean and neat appearance
- 15) Honesty and dependability

- 16) Applying reading and arithmetic to working situations
- 17) General safety practices
- 18) Working independently
- 19) Verbal communications skills

Methods of Prevocational Assessment

Many methods exist for the assessment of prevocational skills. One of the most frequently used methods involves long term observation in simulated working situations. An evaluator can present the student with various locally developed work samples or job tasks and can record the frequency of certain prevocational behaviors over an extended period of time. Unfortunately, this method of assessment is becoming less feasible due to evaluation time constraints and increased numbers of students referred for assessment. Instead of abandoning the idea of prevocational skill assessment completely, substitute methods may be used to gain needed information without large amounts of time being involved. Several of these methods are described below.

First, an evaluator may select a work sample system which includes sections devoted to behavioral observation in critical areas. Examples of these systems are the Jewish Employment Vocational Service Work Sample System (1973), the VALPAR Component Work Sample System (1974), and the McCarron-Dial Work Evaluation System (1976). Besides giving an evaluator critical information regarding vocational aptitude levels, these systems, and others, provide a format by which some of the indicated prevocational concepts can be observed, recorded and compiled in an effort to establish certain behavioral patterns.

Second, specific, prevocational related, evaluation test may be utilized to gain information regarding some specific concepts. The Street Survival Skills Questionnaire (1976) and the VALPAR Prevocational Readiness Battery (1980) are examples of these tests which may be purchased separately

and can be included in an existing vocational evaluation process.

Third, a specific checklist may be utilized to pinpoint specific prevocational concepts which are in need of remediation. Examples of such checklists include the MDC Behavior Identification Format (1974) and the Hamilton County (Ohio) Work Study Program Student Profile (Kaplan, 1977). These checklists along with other similar models available are extremely useful because they not only allow for completion during the evaluation process but can be utilized at subsequent dates to indicate student progress in specific areas.

Fourth, a prevocational checklist may be completed prior to the vocational evaluation or during the intake/orientation process. With this method, a special education teacher, school counselor, or an evaluator can quickly complete a form by means of past observations, student interviews and/or school records. This type of format is particularly helpful in situations where evaluation time is limited. Figure 1 contains an example of such a checklist which may be utilized or may serve as a basis for the development of a model which is specific to the needs of an individual school system.

Evaluator Input to Special Education Curriculum Planning

As professionals knowledgeable in the world of work and the demand of employers, Vocational Evaluators can be of valuable assistance to special educators in the area of curriculum development. Based upon vocationally related strengths and weaknesses indicated in the assessment process, the evaluator may be able to offer suggestions as to the remediation of certain prevocational concepts. Hints may also be given as to some critical skills needed by students prior to entering vocational training or working situations. This may assist the special education teacher

Figure 1

Intake/Referral Form

Full Name _____ Nickname _____ Date _____
 Grade _____ Class Placement/Exceptionality _____
 Address _____ Phone _____ Emergency Phone _____
 Father's Name _____ Occupation _____ Phone _____
 Mother's Name _____ Occupation _____ Phone _____
 Achievement Data: Arithmetic _____ Source _____
 Reading _____ Source _____
 Vocabulary _____ Source _____
 Social Maturity Level _____ Source _____
 Attendance: School Year 84/85 _____ Number days absent _____ Tardy _____
 School Year 83/84 _____ Number days absent _____ Tardy _____
 School Year 82/83 _____ Number days absent _____ Tardy _____
 Medical/Physical Limitations _____
 Medication (If any) _____
 Indicated Occupations of interest _____
 Indicated Vocational Programs of interest _____
 Past Vocational Training _____
 Past Employment _____

Please Check	very appropriate	adequate	inappropriate	N/A	Comment
Move quickly and efficiently between work tasks					
Has necessary materials ready					
Completes tasks quickly					
Works independently without unnecessary assistance					
Completes tasks efficiently/accurately					
Follows through with tasks until complete					
Attending to tasks					
Continues work tasks when teacher is out					
Follows verbal instructions					
Follows written instructions commensurate with reading level					
Follows a model or diagram					
Handles equipment safely/properly					
Honesty					

	very ap- propriate	adequate	inap- propriate	N/A	Comment
Dependability/Trustworthy					
Level of self confidence					
Easily frustrated by difficult tasks					
Easily bored by repetitive tasks					
Demonstrates good study skills					
Completion of homework/ outside assignments					
Accepts new tasks without complaint					
Courteous/good manners					
Maintaining good health practices					
Clean and neat appearance					
Works well with other students					
Displays respect for supervision					
Accepts constructive criticism					
Effectively communicates needs					
Performs work neatly					
Cleans up after work tasks					
Properly organizes work tasks					
Can complete personal information form					

Has student been referred to school officials for discipline related problems? _____

Briefly explain: _____

Has student made recent progress in areas related to discipline problems?

in combining the teaching of basic academic competencies with needed functional concepts which may serve to increase student motivation and increase the learning process. Listed below are a few hints and suggestions possibly gained from assessment. Although certainly not complete, they may serve to generate the development of creative instructional planning relating to prevocational skills development. Also included is a listing of general recommendations which an evaluator may find helpful to include in an assessment report to school officials.

- 1) Bringing industrial representatives to the classroom to discuss concepts required for working in particular settings. Have these representatives discuss the traits, qualities, and attitudes needed along with academic requirements and opportunities for advancement.
- 2) Develop slides showing individuals actually performing jobs in the local community. Discuss dress requirements, environmental demands, skills being used, physical qualities of workers, safety concepts, and level of supervision.
- 3) Look beyond the area of home economics and science when teaching liquid measures. Include activities relating to food service, mechanics, plumbing, and custodial occupations.
- 4) Writing and punctuation skills can be further developed with job applications, insurance forms, invoices and inventory control forms.
- 5) Increase sight word vocabulary and phonetic skills with terms common to industry in the geographical area.
- 6) Dictionary usage activities can be expanded to include tool catalogs, parts books, wholesale order pamphlets, and Department of Labor texts.

- 7) Expand activities using the yellow pages to areas and locations of potential employers.
- 8) Utilize the city map to chart certain delivery routes used by employees of distributing companies: soft drink, beer, office supplies, commercial foods, lumber, welding supplies, etc...)
- 9) Expand the terms used in safety activities to include works, phrases, and procedures common to local industry.
- 10) Plan activities which encompass the entire process of locating and securing employment.
- 11) Visit local industries in order to have students learn first-hand information pertaining to job securing and job retaining skills from individuals who actually do the hiring and firing of workers.
- 12) Utilize activities which allow for the transfer of critical math activities. These include:
 - a. Complete stock requisition forms
 - b. Compute sales tax
 - c. Complete inventory control forms and compute gross and net value of stock or materials on-hand
 - d. Determine discounts and whole sale/retail price
 - e. Compute overtime payments and rates of pay
 - f. Utilize vocational activities relating to fractions, decimals, and the metrics system
- 13) Incorporate the concepts of personnel budgeting with budgeting practices associated in running a small business such as lawn care, home banking, and newspaper delivery.
- 14) When teaching linear measure, incorporate actual measuring instruments encountered in industry. Also utilize the concept of closure. If a

- student is to measure a stock of wood, have her/him cut the wood with a hand saw.
- 15) Objectives relating to personal health care can be expanded to include skills needed for workers in child care and health occupations.

POTENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EVALUATION TO LOCAL SCHOOL OFFICIALS

- Practical home and work related science concepts
- Dressing and grooming for employment situations
- Budgeting and consumer economics
- Increased sight work vocabulary of basic survival and occupational terms
- Familiarization with methods of seeking employment
- Interview techniques
- Familiarization with services offered by public agencies (VRS, etc.)
- Methods of keeping employment and job advancement
- Comprehension of fractions and linear measures to 1/16 inch
- Detailed knowledge of personal data in order to complete occupational and practical living forms
- Familiarization with basic hand and power tools and their usage
- Making change and counting money
- Telling time
- Using a calendar
- Using the telephone for calling, answering, and taking messages
- Alphabetically arranging by letter
- Serially arranging by number
- Job safety practices
- Driver education
- Simple message writing
- Reading dials, gauges, and thermometers
- Simple sorting by physical property (color, size, etc.)
- Reading road signs
- Using a telephone directory
- Familiarization with basic units of measure
- Awareness of different occupations and individual concepts of each
- Utilizing the resources of a local

- newspaper
- Work quality and neatness
- Punctuality and attendance
- Intensive physical education program, emphasizing endurance, speed and strength development
- Work with peers and supervision in a cooperative manner

NOTE:

When including above information on evaluation reports, it may be helpful to draw a short line in the left column in order to indicate, by checkmarks, those areas which are in particular need of remediation.

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