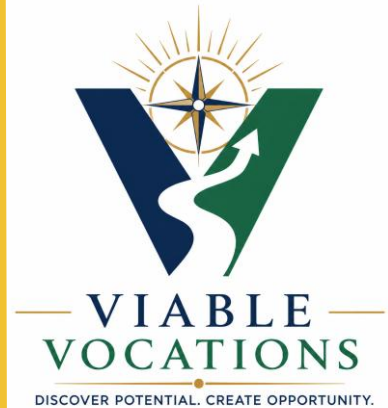


Why Vocational Evaluation Still Matters:

A Key Tool for Student
Employment Success



Catherine A. Via Moran, MA, GCDF - August 6, 2026

1

Presenter Background



- Vocational evaluator, transition specialist, educator, consultant
- M.A. in Education and Human Development, with specialized training in SpEd transition and vocational evaluation
- More than 20 years supporting individuals with disabilities across school, community, and employment settings
- President of VECAP and founder of Viable Vocations
- National presenter on vocational evaluation, transition, disability employment, and ethical AI
- Current transition teacher serving young adults ages 18–22
- Former Career Assessment Center vocational evaluator and Project SEARCH teacher

2

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Learning Objectives



- Differentiate vocational evaluation from vocational and transition assessment
- Identify when vocational evaluation should be used
- Apply AI ethically as a support tool

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Poll



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Why Are We Having This Conversation?



Today's reality — schools face:

1 Limited time

2 Staff shortages

3 Pressure for rapid employment

4 Increased paperwork

5 AI tools

6 Reduced assessment budgets

Has vocational evaluation become obsolete?

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The Research Says NO.



Research consistently shows individualized vocational evaluation improves:



Employment matching



Self-determination



Transition planning



Agency collaboration



Long-term employment stability

7

7

What is Vocational Evaluation?



VECAP defines VE as:

- ✓ Comprehensive
- ✓ Systematic
- ✓ Evidence-based
- ✓ Person-centered
- ✓ Multiple data sources

What it's NOT:

- ✗ One test
- ✗ One observation
- ✗ One interview

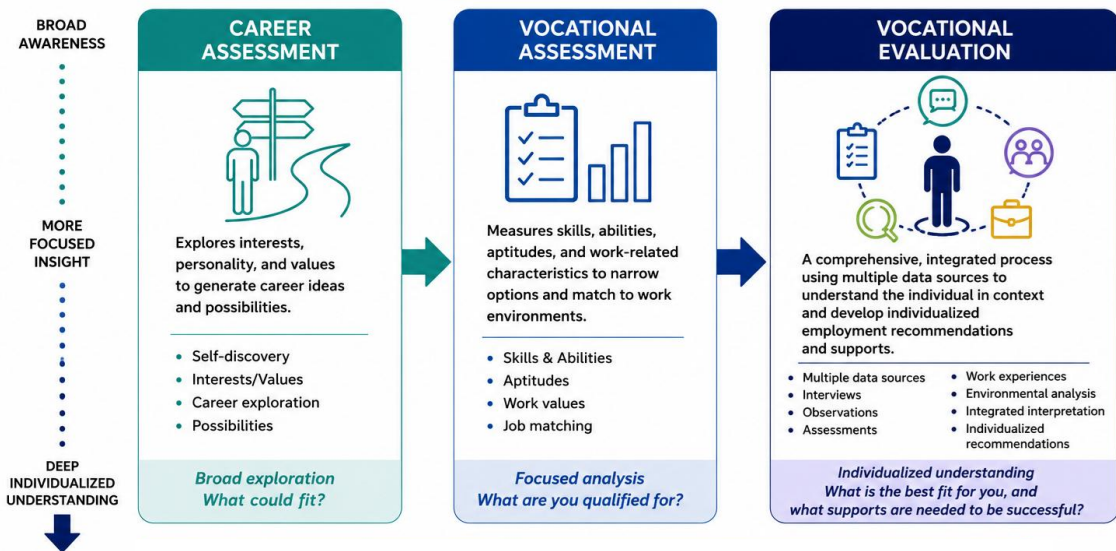
VECAP Dictionary of Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment (n.d.). Vocational Evaluation. Retrieved July 17, 2026, from vecap.org

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The Continuum of Career Information

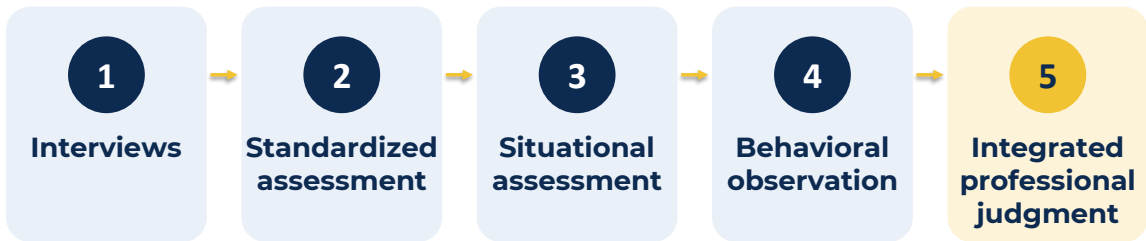
Increasing Depth. Greater Insight. Better Decisions.



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Five Components of Vocational Evaluation

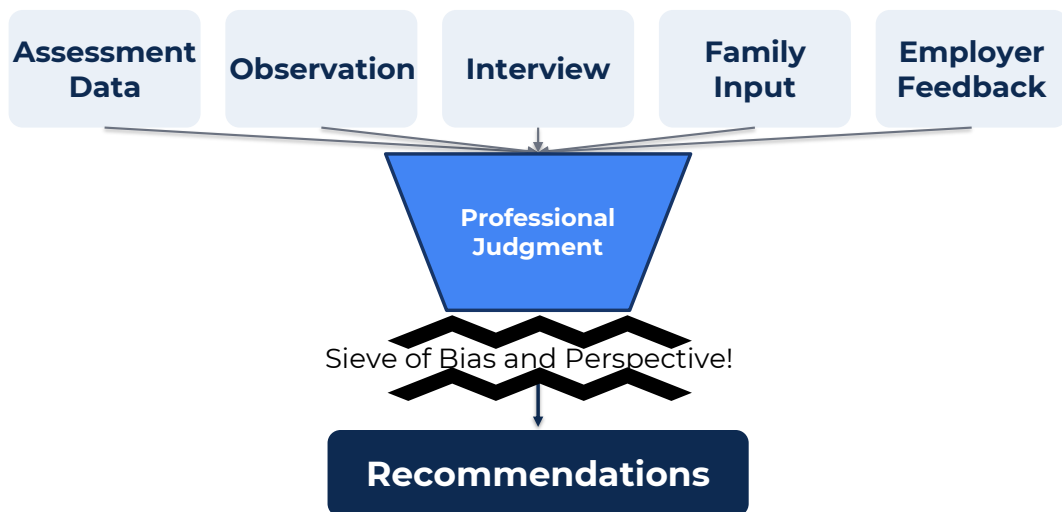


Each layer builds toward one integrated professional judgment.

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Professional Judgment



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What Makes Recommendations Valid?



✗ ***"Student likes animals."***

✓ **Evidence across multiple factors**

Build recommendations on evidence across:

Aptitude

Stamina

Communication

Supports

Learning style

Interests

Behavior

Environment

12

12

Research Spotlight



Students receiving comprehensive evaluation demonstrate:



**Higher
employment
rates**



**Better job
retention**



**More
individualized
planning**



**Higher VR
satisfaction**

13

13

What's Law Got To Do With It?



Transition Law

IDEA

WIOA

Pre-ETS



Evaluation Supports

- ✓ IEP
- ✓ Employment goals
- ✓ Transition services
- ✓ VR referrals

14

14

When Should Schools Request a VE?



1

Complex disability

2

Conflicting data

3

Repeated job failures

4

Family disagreement

5

Transition uncertainty

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Need for VR

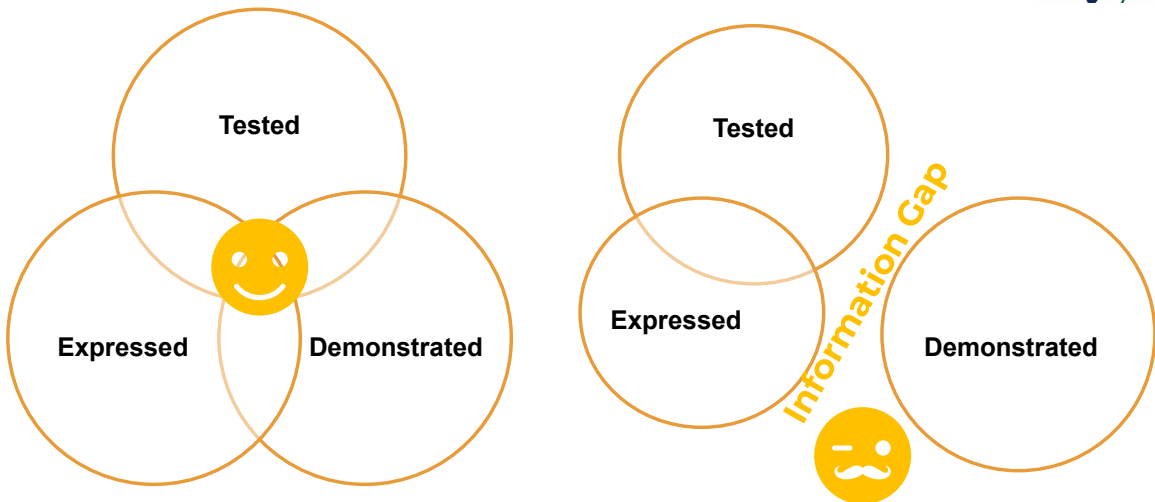
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Supported employment decisions

15

15

When Should Schools Request a VE?



16

16

Case Study



Traditional Planning

- 17-year-old student
- Autism
- Average reading
- Good attendance
- Likes animals

Recommendation
Pet store

Vocational Evaluation

- Noise sensitivity
- Excellent visual memory
- Low social stamina
- Strong sequential skills

Recommendation
changes to:
Inventory management •
Warehouse • Medical
supply • Manufacturing

17

17

What Recommendations Would You Make?



Interactive Chat

What recommendations would YOU make?

18

18

Generative AI in Workforce Development



A framework for responsible use



Professional judgment always leads.

19

19

Ethical AI - Human Judgment Leads



Confidentiality Transparency



Evidence



Accessibility

*Viable Vocations Ethical AI Framework –
Always maintain a human in the loop.*

20

20

Common Myths



MYTH

**X Interest
inventories
replace VE**



REALITY

✓ No

X Anyone can do VE



**✓ Requires integration
and interpretation**

X AI writes reports



**✓ Professionals
synthesize evidence**

21

21

The Future of Vocational Evaluation



Growing needs:

1 Neurodiversity

2 Mental health

3 Complex disability

4 Cultural responsiveness

5 Technology

6 Integrated assessment

22

22

Practical Takeaways



Tomorrow morning, ask:

✓ **Is this individual missing critical evidence?**

✓ **Am I using multiple data sources?**

✓ **Have I integrated observations?**

✓ **Am I documenting supports?**

CRITICAL

Specificity matters: not “can cross the street,” but “can cross the street independently after stopping at the curb, checking both ways, and confirming with staff.”

23

23

Resources



✓ VECAP

✓ Transition Coalition

✓ NTACTION

✓ TransCen

✓ PEATC

✓ DCDT

✓ Journal articles

24

24

Thank you / Questions?



“When we evaluate the whole person,
not merely a set of scores,
we make better decisions about employment, support,
and possibility.”

#presumecompetence

25

25