The purpose of this chapter of the technical manual is to give information about the purpose of the Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG). Specifically, we will detail the importance of creating a new transition assessment and will then fully describe each of the constructs underlying the TAGG assessment. Please note that details regarding the characteristics of the students for whom this assessment is appropriate can be found in Chapter 2 of this technical manual. For now, it suffices to say that this assessment is appropriate for most students who have been diagnosed as having mild to moderate disabilities in a number of categories. Also note that details about the processes employed by the research team to identify the constructs underlying the TAGG can be found in Chapter 3 of this technical manual.

Necessity for the Creation of the TAGG
The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) includes preparing students for postsecondary employment and further education. To do this, teachers, families, and students work together to develop operationalized annual transition goals to move the student toward attaining postsecondary goals. Researchers have found academic skills alone are not sufficiently related to the attainment of transition goals by students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000).

Because academic skills alone are not sufficiently related to the attainment of these transition goals (Benz et al., 2000), the IDEA (2004) mandates Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for secondary students of transition age include postsecondary employment, education and, as needed, independent living transition goals (Wehman & Targett, 2012). In order to develop these transition goals, the law also requires special educators to use transition assessments in writing postsecondary transition goals (Miller, Lombard, & Corbey, 2007), and Indicator 13 regulations require annual transition goals be written using students’ transition needs identified from the age-appropriate transition assessment results (NSTTAC, 2013).

At present many of these postsecondary and annual transition goals are written with the aid of assessment results that are not designed for that purpose (McConnell, 2012). Studies have been conducted to find numerous teaching practices, programs, services, and placements associated with postsecondary education and employment, but none of the studies identified associated student behaviors. This chapter of the
technical manual will describe the development a new transition assessment, the Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG), and the constructs underlying its items. The purpose of the TAGG is to investigate the needs of each student based on their present levels of attaining the non-academic skills and behaviors research has identified as necessary for postsecondary employment and education outcomes. Specifically, the TAGG connects educators’ practice of writing academic goals to a new set of non-academic behaviors associated with postsecondary employment and education. In order to do this, the TAGG develops profiles of students’ attainment of these non-academic skills and then suggests example goals for IEP teams to consider when writing annual and postsecondary transition goals.

The TAGG was designed to help educators identify non-academic behaviors associated with postsecondary employment and education for which students need IEP Transition goals. The TAGG can:

- promote the voice of the family and student in the development of the IEP transition plan,
- identify non-academic behaviors in which the student is strong,
- pinpoint the non-academic behaviors the student has not mastered,
- extend the summary of current performance levels beyond academics, and
- generate goals designed to build on students’ relative strengths and address students’ limitations.

**TAGG Constructs**

**Initial Constructs Tested**

Chapter 3 of this technical manual details the procedures the research team used to develop the constructs underlying the TAGG assessment. After a thorough literature review, ten constructs were identified as encompassing the non-academic skills and behaviors necessary for students with mild to moderate disabilities to undertake that will lead to employment and education outcomes. These ten constructs are:

- Knowledge of Strengths and Limitations,
- Actions Related to Strengths and Limitations,
- Disability Awareness,
- Persistence,
- Proactive Involvement,
- Goal Setting and Attainment,
- Employment,
- Self-Advocacy,
- Supports, and
- Utilization of Resources.

**TAGG Constructs**

The initial review of transition research identified ten behavior clusters (see McConnell, Martin, Juan, Hennessey, Terry, Kazimi et al., 2013 for a detailed explanation of all ten behavior clusters); however, analysis of the clusters indicated eight TAGG constructs. This process is further explained in Chapter 3. Listed below are the eight constructs this version of the TAGG assesses and the behaviors associated with those constructs. Refer to Table 1 for a list of the constructs used in the TAGG and references used to develop those constructs.

**Strengths and Limitations.** The construct of Strengths and Limitations refers to the abilities students with mild to moderate disabilities demonstrate regarding identification of their strengths and weaknesses, whether those are academic or non-academic in nature. Students who have knowledge of their own strengths and limitations are able to demonstrate this
knowledge as well as communicate it to others. They are accurate in what they share about their academic strengths and also show the ability to identify situations where they will be successful (e.g., Gerber, Ginsberg, & Reiff, 1992; Higgins, Raskind, Goldberg, & Herman, 2002; Lachapelle, Wehmeyer, Halewyck, Courbois, Keith, & Schalock, 2005). Please note that the conceptualization of strengths and limitations may or may not be related to the student’s disability, but may be in other areas. This construct on the TAGG was operationalized by McConnell et al. (2013) as Knowledge of Strengths and Limitations; the behavior cluster McConnell and colleagues identified as Actions Related to Strengths and Limitations cannot be operationalized by the TAGG items at this time.

**Disability Awareness.** The construct of Disability Awareness refers to the abilities students exhibit regarding awareness of their specific disability, not their personal weaknesses or limitations. Students who are strong in disability awareness describe their disability in language that is not stigmatizing, and view the disability as one facet of their lives. They can describe the type of supports they need to accommodate their disability. These students are also able to explain that they receive special education services and may seek out more information about their disability to better understand it (e.g., Aune, 1991; Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 1999; Thoma & Getzel, 2005).

**Persistence.** The construct of Persistence applies to all students, but is particularly important for those with disabilities given the struggles they may have to face as a result of that disability. Students who have high TAGG scores in Persistence keep working until they have accomplished a task, and value not giving up in school. Successful students with disabilities often show persistence in the time spent studying compared to non-disabled peers. If they are having difficulty with a task or make a mistake, they adopt the lessons they have learned or try different strategies to keep making progress (e.g., Fabian, 2007; Fabian, Lent, & Willis, 1998; Greenbaum, Graham, & Scales, 1995; Skinner, 2004).

**Interacting with Others.** As originally conceptualized by McConnell et al. (2013), this behavior cluster included more information that was not able to be operationalized by the TAGG. For the TAGG, then, Interacting with Others extends from participating with other students to complete school projects in class to participating in community organizations. These students effectively interact with teachers, family members, and other adults (e.g., Doren & Benz, 1998; Goldberg et al., 2003; Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Liebert, Lutsky, & Gottlieb, 1990).

**Goal Setting and Attainment.** The construct of Goal Setting and Attainment contains much information, and has been shown to be an area of great need for students who exhibit mild to moderate disabilities. Students who have strong goal setting and attainment skills take into account their strengths and weaknesses along with their support community’s wishes when they develop goals. They can break long-term goals into short-term goals, and make and use plans to attain their short-term goals. When these students’ plans do not work, they change their plan, and when they attain a short-term goal, they move on to their next goal. Students who score high in this area have typically met at least one of their transition goals (e.g., Gerber et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2003; Thoma & Getzel, 2005).
**Employment.** The extent to which a student with mild to moderate disabilities has outside employment during high school has consistently shown to be a large predictor of outcomes that the student will attain upon exiting high school. For the TAGG, the Employment construct includes behaviors related to employment during high school, and plans for employment after high school. Students who score high on the Employment construct have had a paid or unpaid job during high school, and express that they want to continue working after high school, particularly in a job that matches their interests (e.g., Dunn & Shumaker, 1997; Fourqurean, Meisgeier, Swank, & Williams, 1991; McDonnall, 2010).

**Student Involvement in the IEP.** When originally conceptualized by McConnell et al. (2013), the construct of Student Involvement in the IEP was entitled Self-Advocacy and included many self-advocacy behaviors a student could employ that were not observable by school personnel. Thus, for the TAGG, this behavioral cluster was conceptualized as the advocacy behaviors a student exhibits during their involvement in the planning of and/or the actual conduct of the IEP meeting. Students who are actively involved in their IEP meetings describe their current performance levels and tell the team their postsecondary goals. They explain how their current course of study is leading them to their postsecondary goal and advocate for themselves by demonstrating the ability to ask teachers for necessary and appropriate accommodations. Ideally, students who are doing well in this construct lead their IEP meetings (e.g., Aune, 1991; Gerber et al., 1992; Gerber et al., 2004; Goldberg et al., 2003; Halpern et al., 1995; Skinner, 2004).

**Support Community.** The construct of Support Community combines Supports and Utilization of Resources from McConnell et al.’s (2013) ten behavior clusters because the supports and resulting behaviors to access those supports or resources exist in the community beyond the student’s school or family. Students who score high on the Support Community construct can recognize support people who provide positive support, and only use support people when they need them. These students also accept support when it is offered, and seek assistance from community agencies (e.g., Gerber et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2003; Madaus, 2006; McNulty, 2003; Thoma & Getzel, 2005; Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001).

**TAGG Versions**

As previously stated, the purpose of the TAGG is to investigate the needs of each student by determining their present levels of attainment of the non-academic skills shown to predict postschool outcomes. In order to do this, three versions of the TAGG were designed. These three versions are appropriate for use by the professional special educator working with the student, the student’s family member, and the student himself. The three TAGG assessments are parallel and data from all three sources will be given by the individuals about the student’s observed behaviors. The three versions of the TAGG were developed because different individuals are able to observe a variety of behaviors exhibited by the student.

Annual transition goals are generated for the student based on responses to each of the three versions. Goals can be generated using the scores from only one version of the assessment, but completing two or more versions allows the IEP team to note
differences in the student’s behavior in school and in the home. Additionally, including the student version as part of a transition assessment promotes the voice of the student, thereby increasing his engagement in the transition planning process. More information about the individuals who can appropriately respond to the three versions of the TAGG regarding a student’s behaviors can be found in Chapter 2 of this technical manual.

**Characteristics of the TAGG**

The TAGG was designed for use with students with mild to moderate disabilities whose plans include postsecondary employment and further education, such as vocational training or college. It can be completed and scored in about 20 minutes. The three TAGG versions include parallel items representing behaviors associated with postsecondary employment and education. The TAGG Profile includes the score report, a written statement of current performance levels to be included in the IEP, and suggested goals based on the assessment responses.

The TAGG was developed following the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999) endorsed by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. It is designed to assess student performance in non-academic areas associated with positive postsecondary outcomes. More information about the structure of the assessment, scoring, measures of reliability, and various studies designed to collect validity evidence can be found in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this technical manual. The *Transitional Assessment and Goal Generator Technical Manual* (2014) can be used to clarify instructions and improve communication of scores to the IEP team. The *Transitional Assessment and Goal Generator User’s Guide*, currently under development, will provide explanation of the administration procedures along with screen shots and sample forms.
References


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|                                   | McDonnall, M. (2010).  