


# Discovery: Finding the Direction to Facilitate Successful Employment



F l o r i d a  
D e v e l o p m e n t a l  
D i s a b i l i t i e s  
C o u n c i l


Sponsored by United States  
Department of Health and Human  
Services, Administration on  
Developmental Disabilities and the  
Florida Developmental Disabilities  
Council, Inc.



# Discovery: Finding the Direction to Facilitate Successful Employment

A process for guiding transition to  
employment for  
students with disabilities

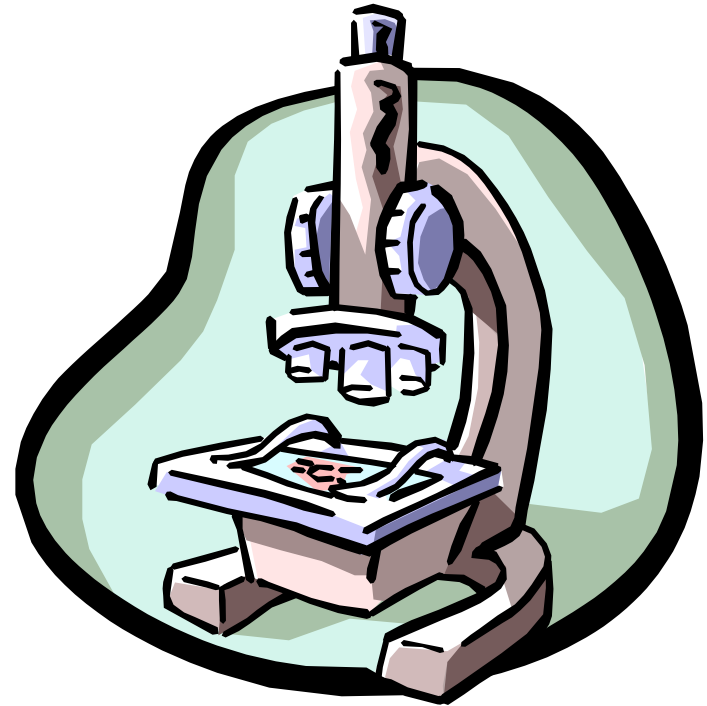
# Essence of Discovery



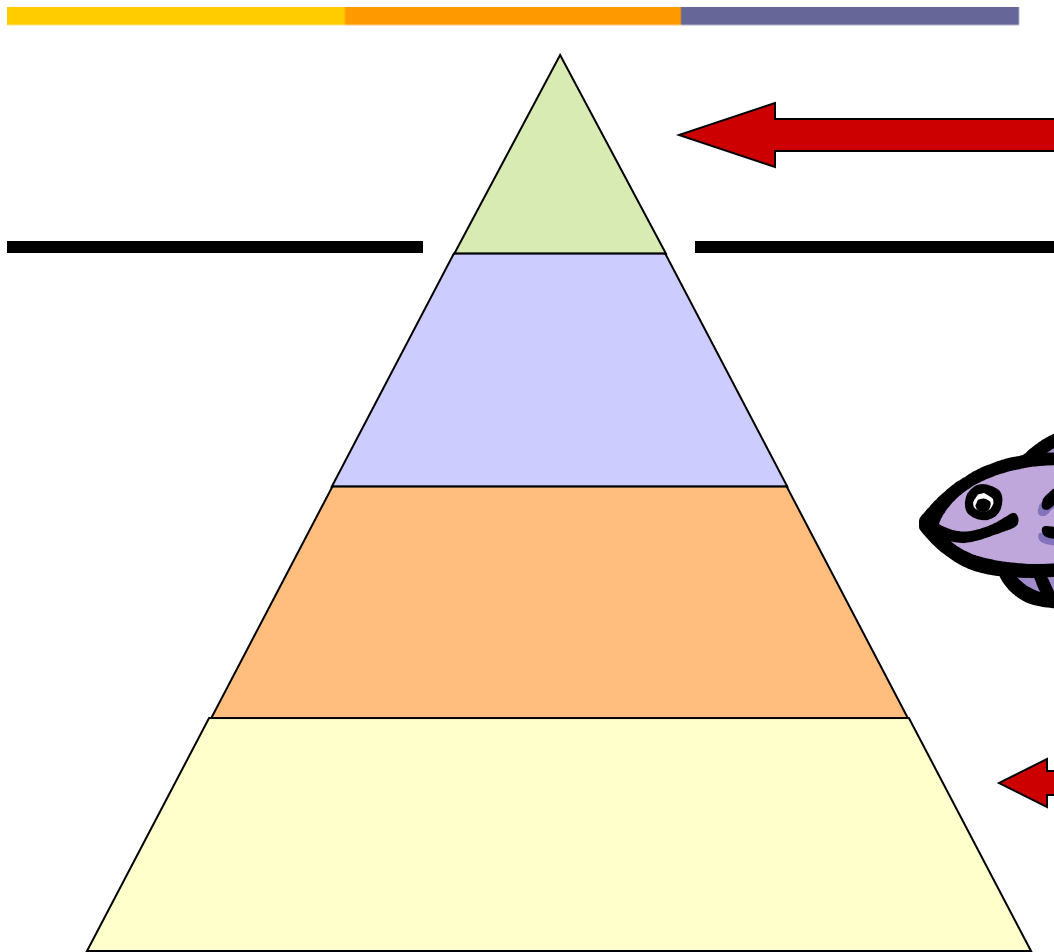
Discovery involves looking at the same thing as everyone else and seeing something different.

# The essence of discovery

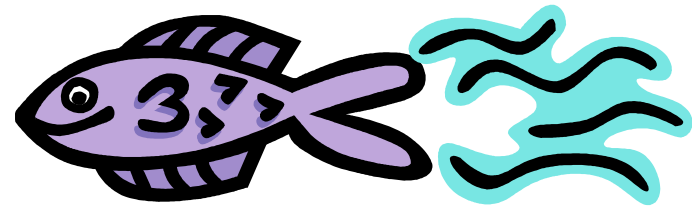
**Discovery:** to gain insight or knowledge of something previously unseen or unknown; to notice or realize; to make known, reveal, disclose



# The Iceberg Analogy of Discovery



What we usually know about the people we try to assist – just the tip of the iceberg



We need to know much more

# The role of discovery

Discovery provides, in a non-traditional, common-sense form, the information needed to determine *the strengths, needs, and interests* of any person with complex life issues.

This is accomplished by simply addressing the question, "Who is this person?"

# Discovery and Traditional Procedures

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

# Discovery and Traditional Procedures

- 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 of discovery is used only as a **guide for matching and customization** and may not be used to systematically exclude a person from employment.



# Discovery and Traditional Procedures

- By implementing discovery, we try to **identify the real complexities** faced by the individual and attempt to negotiate and match employment that fits, rather than putting the burden of resolving complexities solely on the individual.
- The profile strategy seeks to **empower and involve applicants, 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 and service.

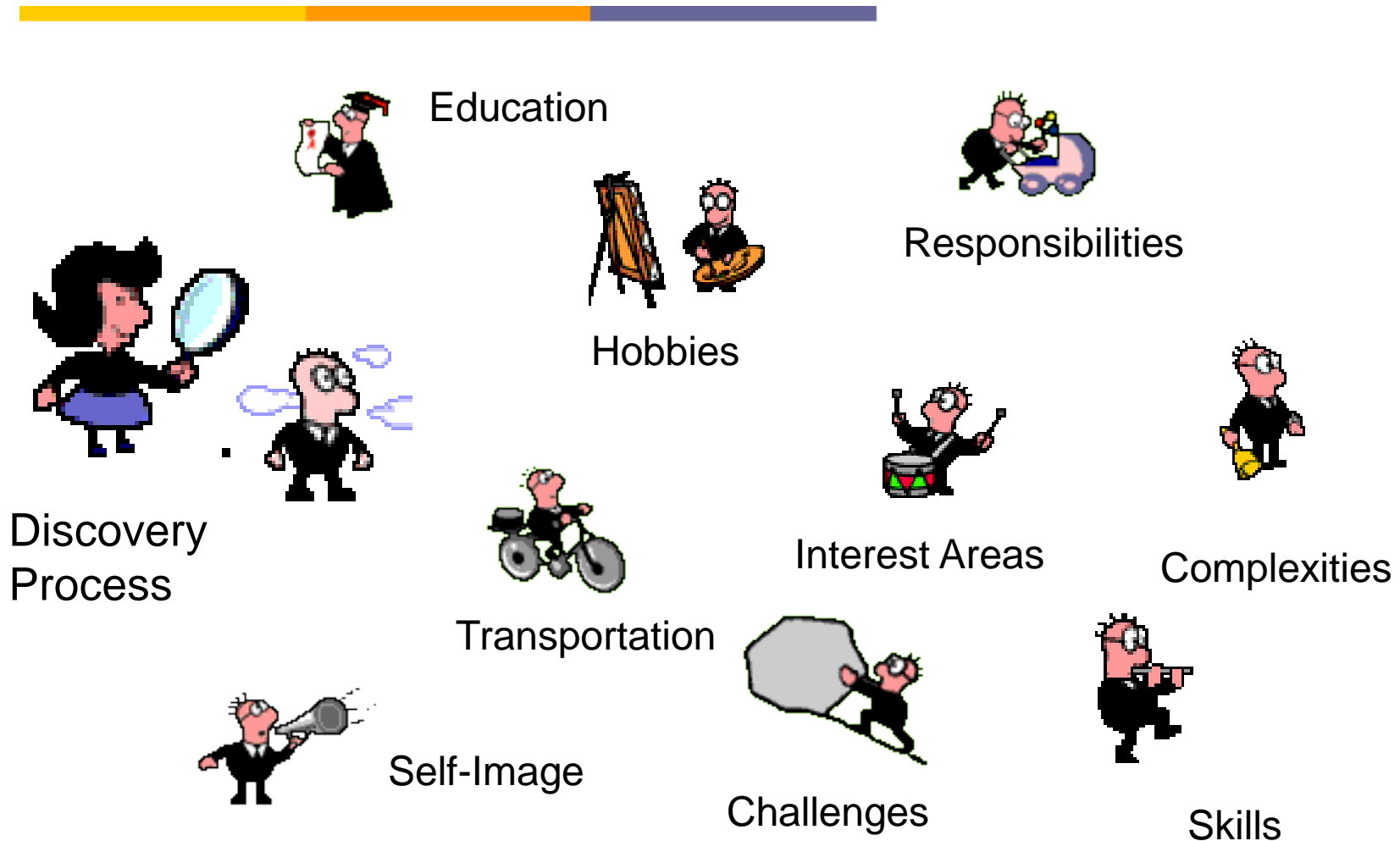
# Discovery is...

- A qualitative research process that involves getting to know people, or helping them get to know themselves, before we plan
- Spending time with applicants, instead of testing or evaluating them, as a means of finding out who they are
- The best way to find out the best that people have to offer
- A common-sense strategy to determine conditions for successful performance, interests and potential contributions

# Discovery is...

- Enhanced when we get to know people 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 customer choice
- A process that can be a part of typical classroom curricular topics

Discovery allows us to determine who the applicant is, their complexities, and potential contributions to employers.



# Approaches to Discovery

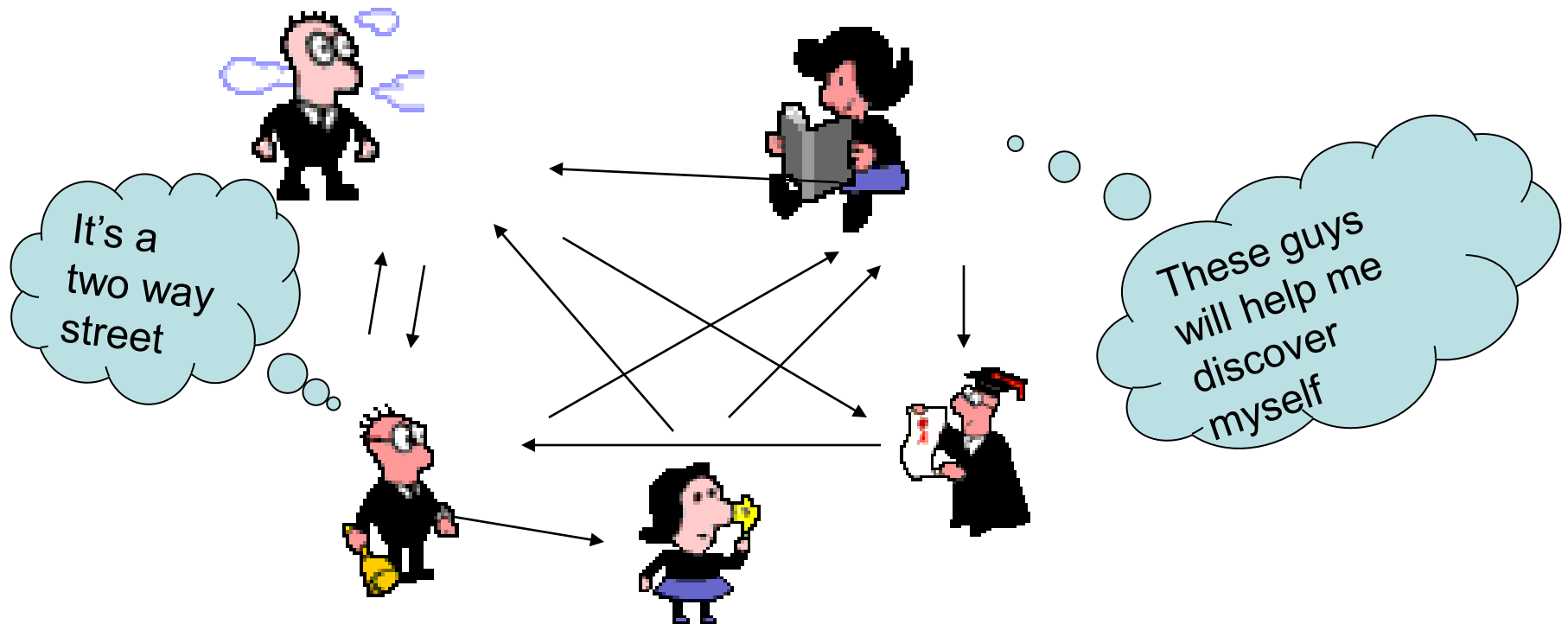
Discovery can either be:

1. Facilitated by someone else, typically an employment professional



# Approaches to Discovery

## 2. Part of a group experience



Elizabeth  
always carried a  
book around. It  
made her feel  
she was part of  
her  
professionally  
oriented family.



We discovered that Jenni's best performance was opening Christmas presents





We discovered Andrew had developed comic videos with freeware



# We discovered Trang was interested in the radio business

Tasks from:

- Reception
- DJs
- Advertising
- Station manager



We discovered Sal helped his mom carry groceries in her walk to the market



We discovered Katherine made coffee at all family/church gatherings



# The "Who" of Discovery

- The person of concern
- Their family and loved ones
- Close and trusted friends
- Neighbors with good relationships
- Professionals who care
  - Counselors
  - Teachers
  - Case managers
  - Service providers

# The "Where" of Discovery

- Home/Living  
Context: Discovery starts where relationships start - where we live
- Neighborhood
- Local Community
- Ethnic group/peer group
- School
- One-stop center
- Church
- Places where the person is "most who they are"

# The "What" of Discovery:

Identifying the best aspects of the person

- Routines
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Challenges
- Associations
- Friendships
- Shops and Services
- Tasks
- Solutions
- Connections
- Education
- Location
- Life performance
- Community inventory

# Meet Andrew in High School

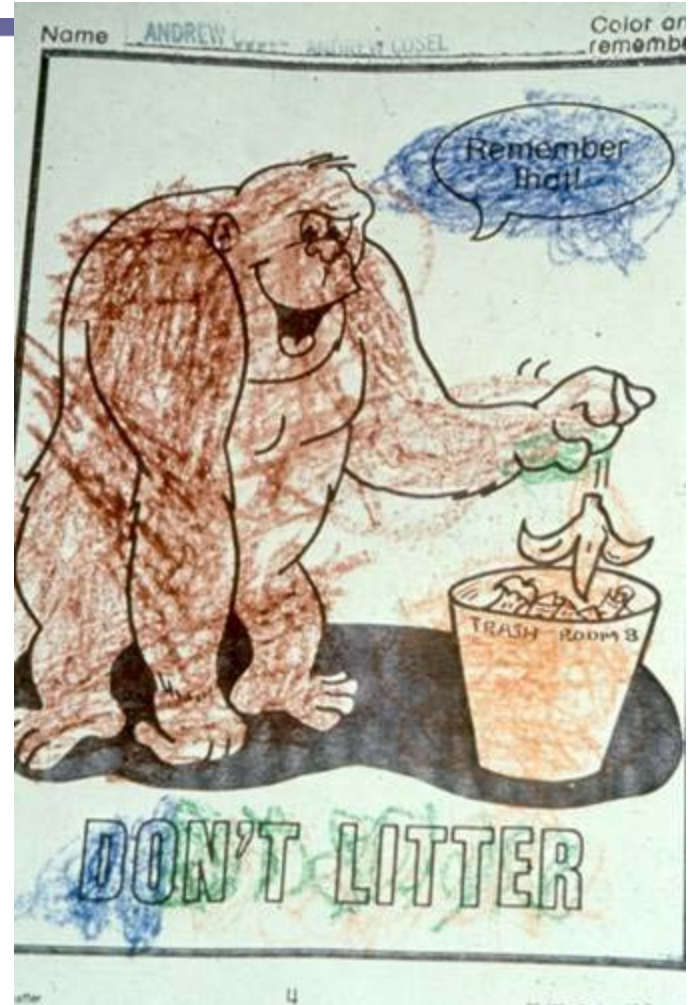
Andy was a typical young person with a disability





# The School's view of Andy

At eighteen years old, he was still viewed as a young child who was not “ready” to enter into a life as an employed adult



# Testing results...

- “able to remain focused for approx. 30 minutes”
- “he would say ‘too hard’ and cease work’
- Reading Comp: 1.6 grade level
- SRA non-verbal reasoning test: 4<sup>th</sup> percentile
- Minn. Clerical test: 1<sup>st</sup> percentile, timed & un-timed
- WREST: “very poor range in all areas
- Productivity rate 6%
- On work samples: “accuracy improved very slowly with practice and constant one-one supervision”

# The negative impression of testing

"Relative to all work samples administered, it appeared that Mr. Cosel's performance was best when tasks involved no more than one or two steps."

"Due to Mr. Cosel's very low level of productivity and his need for constant supervision, traditional employment is not feasible at this time. Training and education which enables him to practice simple manual skills such as packaging and sorting should be explored in the future."

# Beyond the Presumptions of Evaluation

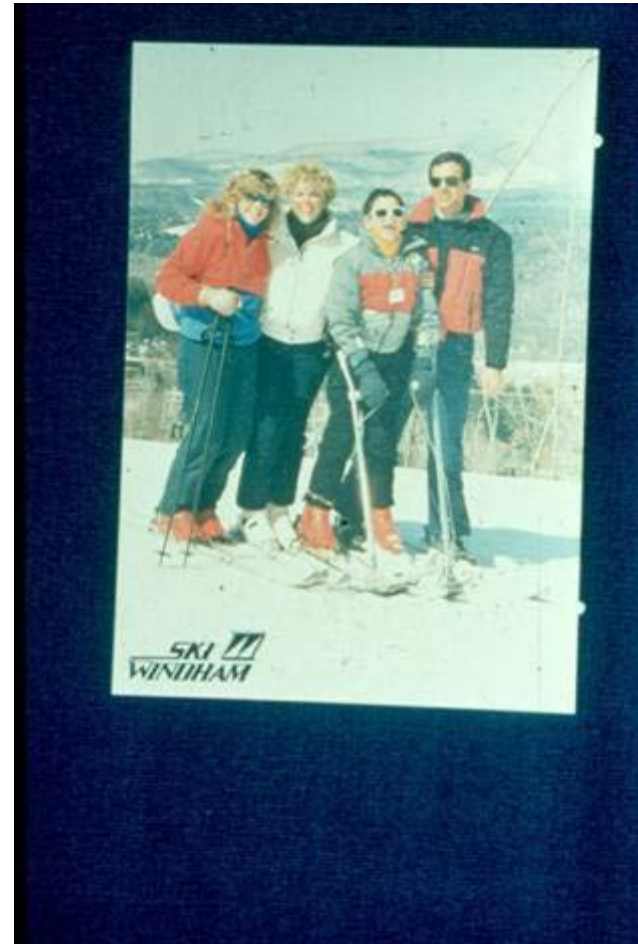
In order to find an optimistic path towards employment, in light of poor test performance and low expectations, it was necessary to get to know Andy much more deeply than who he seemed to be those who knew him professionally.

# Discovery provided a new picture of Andy



# New dimensions of his personality, skills and interests

His pastime activities gave us insight into skills that the tests did not identify



# Andy's hobbies and interests gave perspective to his overall character

From Computers



To musical interests...



# Family and friends





# Support from his service dog



# Employment experiences



Delivering cash receipts

Assisting warehouse  
personnel



# Importance of Discovery

Facilitated Discovery provided a clear, alternative picture of Andy. It provided sufficient information and direction to develop a plan for customized job development.

Andy started work at teaching hospital at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island after job development by his family.

Andy is responsible for delivery of data processing information to 82 depts. within the hospital



# Still working...

Andy is still working today,  
fifteen years later.



# And still painting...





Let's all go do Discovery!