Self-Determination:
An Evidence-Based Practice for All Students

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Adapted and used with permission from Wehmeyer, M L (nd) Promoting the Self-Determination of Youth and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Agenda

- Understanding self-determination as a cross-curricular & multi-curricular instructional approach
- Reminder about student-directed IEP meetings as a starting point
- Research about self-determination as an evidence-based practice (Why it’s important)
- 2 research-based approaches to the instruction of self-determination implemented with school-age youth with all types of disabilities (What we know works for youth)
Student-directed IEP Review

- Research-based self-determination strategy
- Particularly powerful effects
- What we teach using traditional teacher/administrator led approaches to IEP meetings
- What we teach using student-directed approaches to IEP meetings
- A cross & multicultural approach to self-determination instruction
Important Research Findings

Self-Determination: An Evidence-Based Instructional Practice
Research Findings

- Research shows that youth/adults with disabilities are less self-determined than their non-disabled peers
  - Does not represent the ability to become self-determined
  - Fewer opportunities to make choices and express preferences
  - Research shows that SD predicts higher quality of life
  - Better measured quality of life
  - Higher rates of employment & wages
  - Higher rates of community participation, independent living & independence

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The core dimensions of quality of life include

1. emotional well-being
2. interpersonal relations
3. material well being
4. personal development
5. physical well-being
6. self-determination
7. social inclusion
8. human/civil rights
Research Findings

- Reciprocal relationship between recreation activities and self-determination (young adults)
- Students with disabilities who leave school as self-determined are:
  - More independent one year after graduation
  - More likely to live somewhere other than where they lived in high school one year after graduation
  - More likely to be employed for pay at higher wages one year after graduation
  - More likely to be employed in a position that provides health care, sick leave, and vacation benefits three years after graduation
  - Are significantly more likely to live independently three years after graduation
Social abilities and adaptive behavior skills are related to more positive self-determination.

Choice-making opportunity is a strong predictor of self-determination.

Research shows that the environments in which adults with disabilities live or work frequently limit opportunities to make choices and restrict personal autonomy.

Many people believe that people with intellectual disability cannot be self-determined because of their cognitive impairment.
Research consistently shows that while SD is positively correlated with IQ

• The (correlation) relationship is weak
• IQ is not significantly predictive of self-determination
Research Findings

- Adults with disabilities rank self-determination as more important than do professionals and parents/family members.

- Special education teachers report that:
  - they are familiar with self-determination
  - believe self-determination is an important component of transition planning
  - believe that student involvement in planning is important
  - their level of training, students’ type and level of disability, and type of teaching placement impact their ratings of the importance of promoting self-determination
Parents of school-age students with disabilities perceive promotion of self-determination as important.

Parents report that they do not believe that their sons/daughters receive enough instruction on component elements of self-determined behavior at school.

Despite wide acceptance of the importance of self-determination:
- explicit instruction to promote self-determination during the school years is limited.
- goals addressing self-determination are not included on many student’s Individualized Education Programs.
- When efforts to promote self-determination are in place, there are few efforts to systematically assess the effect of those interventions.
Research Findings

- Teachers report that barriers to promoting self-determination include:
  - Their belief about whether the student will benefit
  - Insufficient time, particularly in context in the absence of training to infuse in Common Core
  - Insufficient training and knowledge about promoting self-determination
  - Insufficient time to plan to integrate instruction to promote self-determination into the instructional day
Data exists to support the efficacy of several self-determination-focused intervention models/programs, including:

- Steps to Self-Determination (Hoffman & Field, 1995)
- TAKE CHARGE for the Future (Powers et al, 2001)
- Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000)
- Whose Future Is It Anyway? (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Lee et al, 2011)
Research Findings
Strategies that Increase Self-Determination

- Meta-analytic (group and single-subject design studies) of existing research show that students with disabilities can acquire component elements of self-determined behavior (e.g., choice making, decision making, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, self-advocacy, self-regulation, perceptions of efficacy, self-awareness, self-knowledge) if taught

- Student-directed learning strategies particularly powerful (e.g., Student-direct & led IEP meetings)
Promoting Self-Determination

- Instruction on component elements of determined behavior
- Self-determination curricula and assessment materials
- Student-directed planning materials
4 Elements of Self-Determination

- Autonomy
- Self-Regulation
- Psychological Empowerment
- Self-Knowledge (aka Self-realization)

Go to 24
Autonomy

- The progression from being dependent on others for care and guidance to self-care and self-direction
- Includes natural interdependence guided by causal agency (ie, choice)
- Autonomy involves acting volitionally, based on one’s own will
  - Volition is the capability of conscious choice, decision, and “intention” (Gove, 1967)
  - Volitional behavior, then, implies intent Self-determined behavior is volitional, intentional, and self-caused or self-initiated
Self-Regulation

- Enables individuals to examine their environments and their responses for coping with those environments
  - to make decisions about how to act
  - to act
  - to evaluate the desirability of the outcomes of the action
  - to revise their plans as necessary” (Whitman, 1990, p 373)
Self-Regulation

- Self-regulated behaviors include
  - self-management strategies (including self-monitoring, self-instruction, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement)
  - goal setting and attainment behaviors
  - problem-solving and decision-making behaviors
  - observational learning
Psychological Empowerment

- Multiple dimensions of perceived control
  - The “I did it by myself!” feeling
  - “I know I can do this”
- Using problem-solving skills and achieving perceived or actual control in one’s life (e.g., learned hopefulness)
- Use of strategies that achieve desired goals
- Choice-making & decision-making
- Self-management (strategies for task completion)
- Self-evaluation (strategies for self-assessing performance)
Psychological Empowerment

- 3 Commonly Cited Elements
  1. Locus of control
  2. Efficacy
  3. Motivation
Self-Knowledge

- Knowledge and understanding of self
- Use a comprehensive, and reasonably accurate knowledge of themselves
- their strengths and limitations
- act in such a manner as to capitalize on this knowledge
Self-Knowledge

- Forms through experience with and interpretation of one's environment
- Influenced by evaluations of significant others,
- Reinforcement, and attributions of one's own behavior
Component Elements of Self-Determined Behavior

- Choice-making
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Goal setting and attainment
- Self-advocacy
- Self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement
- Internal locus of control
- Positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy
- Self-awareness
- Self-knowledge
Choice Making

- Making a choice indicating a preference between two or more options
- Particularly important for childhood/early elementary
- Provides opportunity to teach students they have a voice in their education
- Including a choice opportunity within behavioral interventions has been shown to improve outcomes
- People’s preferences change. Just because a student liked something at one time doesn’t mean he or she will like it at another time
  - Assess frequently
Integrating Choices Into Teaching

- incorporating student choice as an early step in the instructional process
- increasing the number of choices related to a given activity which the student makes
- increasing the number of domains in which choices are made
- raising the significance in terms of risk and long-term consequences of the choices which the student makes
- clear communication with the student concerning areas of possible choice, and the limits within which choices can be made (Shevin & Klein, 1984, pp 164)
Integrating Choices Into Teaching

- raising the significance in terms of risk and long-term consequences of the choices which the student makes and

- clear communication with the student concerning areas of possible choice, and the limits within which choices can be made (Shevin & Klein, 1984, pp 164)
Promoting Problem-Solving

- A problem is an activity or task for which a solution is not known or readily apparent
- Three focal points to instruction in problem solving:
  - problem identification
  - problem explication and analysis
  - problem resolution
- Should occur within environments that emphasize
  - student’s capacity to solve problems
  - promote open inquiry and exploration
  - encourage generalization
Findings: Problem Solving

- Many, if not most, of the types of problems that need to be addressed are social in nature and involve one’s interactions with others.
- Any difficulty in understanding social and emotional cues will, in turn, impact a student’s capacity to identify and analyze the problem.
- Most research/practice to promote social/emotional understanding has focused exclusively on social skills, without addressing social problem solving.
- Some exceptions to above:
  - Bauminger (2002) used role playing to teach students with ASD social problem solving.
  - Bernard-Opitz, Sriram, and Nakhoda-Sapuan (2001) developed video-based computer program to teach social problem solving.
Most models of decision making incorporate the following steps:

- list options for possible action
- identify possible consequences of each action
- assess the probability of each consequence occurring (if the action were undertaken)
- establishing the relative importance (value or utility) of each consequence
- identify the most attractive course of action
Goal Setting and Attainment

- Goal setting theory is built on the underlying assumption that goals are regulators of human action.
- Effects of goal setting on behavior is a function of goal difficulty and specificity as well as previous experience with the activity or action.
Goal Setting and Attainment

- Instructional efforts to promote goal setting and attainment should focus on:
  - Goal identification and enunciation
  - Developing objectives to meet goals
  - Identifying actions necessary to achieve goals
  - Tracking and following progress on goals

- Participation in educational planning and decision-making as ideal generalization mechanism
Promoting Self-Advocacy Skills

- Skills needed to advocate on one’s own behalf
- Will focus on two common threads
  - how to advocate
  - what to advocate
- Particularly important during secondary education, should be tied directly to educational planning meeting
- Rights and responsibilities
- Requesting accommodations
Promoting Self-Advocacy Skills

How to advocate:
- rights and responsibilities
- assertiveness vs aggressiveness
- communicating effectively (one-on-one, small group)
- negotiation, compromise and persuasion
- effective listening
- basic leadership and team skills
Self-Regulation and Student-Directed Learning

Self-regulation is as "a complex response system that enables individuals to examine their environments and their repertoires of responses for coping with those environments to make decisions about how to act, to act, to evaluate the desirability of the outcomes of the action, and to revise their plans as necessary" (Whitman, 1990, p 373)

Self-regulated learning is “the process whereby students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviors, and affects that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of goals” (Schunk, 1994 p 75)

Self-regulated behavior involves use of self-direction and self-management to
  • regulate the process of setting goals
  • developing action plans to achieve those goals
  • implementing and following the action plans
  • evaluating the outcomes of the action plan
  • changing actions plans, if the goal was not achieved (Mithaug, 1993)
What is Student-Directed?

- The key to student-directed is that the student retains control over his or her learning process, even when others (teachers, parents, peers) participate.
- Not the same as doing everything by yourself. That is, students will vary a great deal in the degree to which they can work through the materials independently. Factors which influence this include:
  - Reading or writing skills
  - Confidence in working alone or in small groups
  - Practice with self-directed instruction
Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)

Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities

For more information, visit self-determination.org or email selfdetermination@ku.edu
Student-Directed Learning Strategies

- Self-instruction
- self-monitoring
- self-scheduling
- self-reinforcement
- self-managed antecedent cue

- Research shows improved
  - problem solving skills
  - improved communicative behavior
  - improved daily living skills
  - better academic performance
  - reductions in disruptive behavior
  - Increased involvement in education planning & goals
Promoting Self-Awareness and Self-Understanding (Self-Knowledge or Self-Realization)

- Recognition and identification of physical and psychological needs, and how to meet those needs
- Identify and communicate own interests, beliefs and values
- Understand and accept individual differences
- Handle frustration and stress
- Ability to tell their story
- Ability to speak to a specific identity
Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction

- A plan or pattern that can be used to shape curricula, design instructional or assessment materials, and guide instruction in the classroom and other settings.

- Models of teaching derived from theories about human behavior, cognition, or learning (e.g., information processing models, behavioral models, social interaction models, etc).
Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction

- A model of teaching based on the principles of self-determination and student directed learning

- Primary emphasis is to enable students to apply a problem solving, goal oriented strategy to self-direct learning

- Model has 3 phases:
  - Setting a Learning Goal
  - Constructing a Learning Plan
  - Adjusting Behaviors

- Each Phase has 3 components:
  - Student questions
  - Teacher objectives
  - Instructional strategies
What is the Teacher’s Role?

- Facilitator
  - Do what it takes to enable student to succeed
  - Provide accommodations and support

- Teacher
  - Share expertise in promoting learning
  - Source of information about education

- Advocate
  - Communicate to students that they can succeed
  - Work collaboratively with student to achieve shared goals
Instructional Process for SDLMI

- Each phase has a problem to solve
  - Phase 1: What is my goal?
  - Phase 2: What is my plan?
  - Phase 3: What have I learned?

- A problem is a task, activity, or situation for which a solution is not immediately identified, known, or obtainable

- Solving a problem is the process of identifying a solution that resolves the initial perplexity or difficulty
Instructional Process for SDLMI

- Solving the problem in each phase leads to the next phase
  - Solving the “what is my goal” problem leads to setting a goal
  - Setting a goal leads to the need for an action plan
  - Solving the “what is my plan” problem leads to the design and implementation of an action plan to achieve the goal
  - Implementing the plan leads to the need to track progress toward the goal
  - Solving the “what have I learned” problem leads to either goal completion, revision of the plan, or revision of the goal
Instructional Process for SDLMI

- The problem in each phase is solved by answering a set of four questions
- The questions change based on the problem to be solved, but they represent the four steps in any problem solving process:
  1. Identify the problem
  2. Identify potential solutions to the problem
  3. Identify barriers to solving the problem
  4. Identify consequences of each solution
Figure 1.1 Wehmeyer’s Functional Model of Self-Determination

A Functional Model of Self-Determination

Development

Environment

Capacity

Perception/Belief

Opportunity

Experience

Supports

Autonomy
Self-Regulation
Psychological Empowerment
Self-Realization

Relative Self-Determination
Phase 1: Set a Goal

Student Problem to Solve: What is my goal?

Educational Supports
- Student self-assessment of interests, abilities, and instructional needs.
- Awareness Training.
- Choice-Making Instruction.
- Problem-Solving Instruction.
- Decision-Making Instruction.
- Goal Setting Instruction

Teacher Objectives

Student Question 1: What do I want to learn?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable students to identify specific strengths and instructional needs.
- Enable students to communicate preferences, interests, beliefs and values.
- Teach students to prioritize needs.

Student Question 2: What do I know about it now?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable students to identify their current status in relation to the instructional need.
- Assist students to gather information about opportunities and barriers in their environments.

Student Question 3: What must change for me to learn what I don’t know?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable students to decide if action will be focused toward capacity building, modifying the environment, or both.
- Support students to choose a need to address from the prioritized list.

Student Question 4: What can I do to make this happen?

Teacher Objectives
- Teach students to state a goal and identify criteria for achieving goal.

Go to Phase 2
Phase 1: Set a Goal

Student Problem to Solve: What is my goal?

Educational Supports
- Student self-assessment of interests, abilities, and instructional needs.
- Awareness Training.
- Choice-Making Instruction.
- Problem-Solving Instruction.
- Decision-Making Instruction.
- Goal Setting Instruction

Teacher Objectives
- Enable students to identify specific strengths and instructional needs.
- Enable students to communicate preferences, interests, beliefs and values.
- Teach students to prioritize needs.

Student Question 1: What do I want to learn?
Phase 1 continued

- **Student Question 2**: What do I know about it now?
  - **Teacher Objectives**
    - Enable students to identify their current status in relation to the instructional need.
    - Assist students to gather information about opportunities and barriers in their environments.

- **Student Question 3**: What must change for me to learn what I don't know?
  - **Teacher Objectives**
    - Enable students to decide if action will be focused toward capacity building, modifying the environment, or both.
    - Support students to choose a need to address from the prioritized list.

- **Student Question 4**: What can I do to make this happen?
  - **Teacher Objectives**
    - Teach students to state a goal and identify criteria for achieving goal.

Go to Phase 2
Phase 2: Take Action

Student Problem to Solve: What is my plan?

Educational Supports
- Self-scheduling.
- Self-Instruction.
- Antecedent Cue Regulation.
- Choice-making instruction.
- Goal-Attainment strategies.
- Problem-solving instruction.
- Decision-making instruction.
- Self-Advocacy and assertiveness training.
- Communication skills training.
- Self-monitoring.

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to self-evaluate current status and self-identified goal status.

Student Question 5: What can I do to learn what I don’t know?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to determine plan of action to bridge gap between self-evaluated current status and self-identified goal status.

Student Question 6: What could keep me from taking action?

Teacher Objectives
- Collaborate with student to identify most appropriate instructional strategies.
- Teach student needed student-directed learning strategies.
- Support student to implement student-directed learning strategies.
- Provide mutually agreed upon teacher-directed instruction.

Student Question 7: What can I do to remove these barriers?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to determine schedule for action plan.
- Enable student to implement action plan.
- Enable student to self-monitor progress.

Student Question 8: When will I take action?

Go to Phase 3
Phase 2: Take Action

Student Problem to Solve: What is my plan?

Educational Supports
- Self-scheduling
- Self-Instruction
- Antecedent Cue Regulation
- Choice-making instruction
- Goal-Attainment strategies
- Problem-solving instruction
- Decision-making instruction
- Self-Advocacy and assertiveness training
- Communication skills training
- Self-monitoring

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to self-evaluate current status and self-identified goal status

Student Question 5: What can I do to learn what I don’t know?
Phase 2 continued

Student Question 6: What could keep me from taking action?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to determine plan of action to bridge gap between self-evaluated current status and self-identified goal status.

Student Question 7: What can I do to remove these barriers?

Teacher Objectives
- Collaborate with student to identify most appropriate instructional strategies.
- Teach student needed student-directed learning strategies.
- Support student to implement student-directed learning strategies.
- Provide mutually agreed upon teacher-directed instruction.

Student Question 8: When will I take action?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to determine schedule for action plan.
- Enable student to implement action plan.
- Enable student to self-monitor progress.

Go to Phase 3
Phase 3: Adjust Goal or Plan

Student Problem to Solve: What have I learned?

Educational Supports
- Self-evaluation strategies.
- Choice-making instruction.
- Goal-setting instruction.
- Problem-solving instruction.
- Decision-making instruction.
- Self-reinforcement strategies.
- Self-recording strategies.
- Self-monitoring.

Student Question 9: What actions have I taken?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to self-evaluate progress toward goal achievement.

Student Question 10: What barriers have been removed?

Teacher Objectives
- Collaborate with student to compare progress with desired outcomes.

Student Question 11: What has changed about what I don’t know?

Teacher Objectives
- Support student to re-evaluate goal if progress is insufficient.
- Assist student to decide if goal remains the same or changes.
- Collaborate with student to identify if action plan is adequate or inadequate given revised or retained goal.
- Assist student to change action plan if necessary.

Student Question 12: Do I know what I want to know?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to decide if progress is adequate, inadequate, or if goal has been achieved.
Phase 3: Adjust Goal or Plan

Student Problem to Solve: What have I learned?

Educational Supports
- Self-evaluation strategies.
- Choice-making instruction.
- Goal-setting instruction.
- Problem-solving instruction.
- Decision-making instruction.
- Self-reinforcement strategies.
- Self-recording strategies.
- Self-monitoring.

Student Question 9: What actions have I taken?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to self-evaluate progress toward goal achievement.

Student Question 10: What barriers have been removed?

Teacher Objectives
- Collaborate with student to compare progress with desired outcomes.
Phase 3 continued

Student Question 11: What has changed about what I don’t know?

Teacher Objectives
- Support student to re-evaluate goal if progress is insufficient.
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- Collaborate with student to identify if action plan is adequate or inadequate given revised or retained goal.
- Assist student to change action plan if necessary.

Student Question 12: Do I know what I want to know?

Teacher Objectives
- Enable student to decide if progress is adequate, inadequate, or if goal has been achieved.
Figure 1.2  Five-Step Model of Self-Determination

Environment

Know Yourself and Your Environment
- Dream
- Know your strengths, weaknesses, needs, and preferences
- Know options, supports, and expectations
- Decide what is important to you

Value Yourself
- Accept and value yourself
- Use weaknesses to find strengths
- Recognize and respect rights and responsibilities
- Take care of yourself
- Develop and nurture positive relationships

Plan
- Set goals
- Plan small steps to meet goals
- Anticipate results
- Be creative
- Visually rehearse

Act
- Take risks
- Communicate
- Access resources and support
- Negotiate
- Deal with conflict and criticism
- Be focused and persistent

Experience Outcomes and Learn
- Compare outcome to expected outcome
- Compare performance to expected performance
- Realize success
- Make adjustments

Teachers who are self-determined are betterable to promote self-determination

- Know themselves and their students They need to understand the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and preferences of their students and have a solid grasp of their own strengths and weaknesses as teachers
- Value themselves They need to believe in their assessment of their skills and their situation, and they need to be able to move forward with their curriculum implementation plans with confidence
Lessons Learned
Field & Hoffman, 2002

- Put their knowledge and beliefs about the needs of their students and what they as teachers can offer to their students into a plan. They need to undertake the necessary preparation that will help to ensure success for their curriculum implementation.
- Put their plan into action.
- Evaluate their implementation efforts, modify their plans for the future, if needed, and celebrate their successes.
Lessons Learned
Field & Hoffman, 2002

- Self-determination knowledge and skills can be included in many subject areas
- It has been used in special education self-contained and resource room classes, general education language arts, career English, creative writing, social studies, math, ninth-grade orientation, study skills, ninth-grade academies, advisory rooms, and alternative education
- Self-determination instruction is typically most successful when teachers select for implementation a class where there is significant overlap between the class content and the skills stressed in the self-determination curriculum
Lessons Learned
Field & Hoffman, 2002

- Use of *curriculum-mapping* to determine the best class in which to use the Steps curriculum
- Involve parents in the curriculum
- **Support for positive relationships is central to self-determination**
- Achievement of valued goals is an important element of self-determination instruction
Culture of Self-Determination

- Supports all students in achieving self-determination
- *Involves youth and families in training of other students and professionals*
- Promotes activities in all elements of organization that support SD
- *Implements strategies for teaching self-determination and infusing self-determination in all learning activities*
Culture of Self-Determination

- Promotes activities in all elements of organization that support SD
- Implements strategies for teaching self-determination and infusing self-determination in all learning activities
Culture of Self-Determination

- Informs communities about self-determination
- Promotes leadership of persons with disabilities
- Includes and supports persons with disabilities who are exemplars in the instruction of self-determination
Culture of Self-Determination

- Values self-determination as it is constructed and defined within cultural perspectives
- Organization is an exemplar of the outcomes it supports
- Resource: AUCD UCEDD Self-Determination Self-Assessment
Transfer of Learner Control

![Diagram showing the transfer of learner control between high and low control of learning over time for both students and faculty. The graph illustrates that as control of learning increases for students, it decreases for faculty, and vice versa.](image)

- **High Control of Learning**
  - Student: Increasing over time
  - Faculty: Decreasing over time
- **Low Control of Learning**
  - Student: Decreasing over time
  - Faculty: Increasing over time
Resources

- **KU Beach Center: Self-Determination**
  - Self-Determination Inventory: Student-Report (SDI:SR)
  - Self-Determination Inventory: Parent and Teacher Report (SDI:PTR)
  - ARC Self-Determination Scale: Adolescent
  - Adolescent Procedural Guidelines
  - ARC Self-Determination Scale: Adult
  - Adult Procedural Guidelines

- **Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities**
  - National Gateway to Self-Determination

- **Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment**
  - Self-Directed IEP
For More Information

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