



Self-Determination
Effective Transitions

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Session Overview

- What is self-determination?
- Where is the emphasis on self-determination coming from?
- Why is self-determination important?
What does the research support?
- How can schools help students to become more self-determined?

[Thinking about transition.....]

- Think back to a major change in your life

What kinds of feelings did you experience?

What did people who were paid to help you do that was helpful? How did they get in your way?

What did family and friends do that was helpful? How did they get in your way?

[What is self-determination?]

- What words come to mind when you hear the phrase self-determination?

[Self-Determination Definitions]

- “The attitudes, abilities and skills that lead people to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative to reach those goals” (Ward, 1988)
- “Determination of one’s own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will” (American Heritage Dictionary, 1992)

[Self-Determination Definitions]

- “One’s ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field & Hoffman, 1994)
- “acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference” (Wehmeyer, 2001, p. 24)

[Self-Determination Definitions]

- Self-determined people “know what they like, what they can do, what they want, and how to get it... they self-direct and self-correct in order to succeed.” (Mithaug 1991, p. ix). Therefore, “*self-determination* is choosing and enacting choice in persistent pursuit of self-interest (Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1995). *Self-interest* is what one likes, what one wants, and can do; *persistent pursuit* is self-direction and self-correction to meet expectations and goals; and *success* is meeting expectations and goals.”

[Self-Determination Definitions]

- Synthesis Definition
“Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults in our society.” (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998, p. 2)

[What is self-determination?]

- “What it all comes down to is choice, and the right to chase our dreams. What I mean is this—the power to direct our lives the way we want, not the way others expect us to; the ability to use the control we have as citizens to vote, to choose where and with whom we want to live, to decide where we want to work; and to make decisions that are right for us. Most importantly self-determination means respecting our right to pursue own goals and dreams. I don’t think that’s asking for too much, do you? *Irving Martin*

[What is self-determination?]

- “We do not have to be told what self-determination means. We already know that it is just a ten dollar word for choice. That it is just another word for freedom. We already know that self-determination is just another word for describing a life filled with rising expectations, dignity, responsibility and opportunity. That it is just another work for having the change to live the American Dream.” *Robert Williams*

[High School Students' Definitions of Self-Determination]

- *Self-determination is taking charge.*
- *Self-determination is being confident in you!*
- *Self-determination keeps me motivated.*
- *Self-determination is when you are making new opportunities.*
- *Self-determination brings the future to us.*

[Foundation for the self-determination "movement"]

- Special education federal and state initiatives
- Positive psychology research and practice
- Research on motivation and learner engagement

[Special Education Initiatives]

- Office of Special Education Program sponsored research and development for improving self-determination for students with disabilities.
- IDEA requires that students with disabilities be invited to IEP planning meetings if transition goals are to be discussed and that IEP goals take into account students' preferences and interests.

[Positive Psychology Research]

Ryan & Deci (2000) Theory of Self-Determination

- A basic need (physical or psychological) is an energizing state that, if satisfied, conduces toward health and well-being, but, if not satisfied, contributes to pathology and ill-being. (p. 74)
- The basic needs for “competence, autonomy and relatedness must be satisfied across the lifespan for the individual to experience an ongoing sense of integrity and well-being.” p. 74-75

Why is self-determination important? Let's look at the research.

- Houchins (1998) found a positive correlation between scores on self-determination assessment and academic achievement scores for students who were incarcerated.
- Sarver (2000) found a positive relationship between scores on self-determination assessment and grade point average for postsecondary students with learning disabilities.

Research on Self-Determination

- Wehmeyer & Schwartz (1997)
 - One year after high school, students in high self-determination (SD) group were
 - twice as likely to be employed, and
 - earned on average of \$2.00/hour more as those in the low self-determination group.

Research on Self-Determination

- Wehmeyer & Palmer (2003)
 - One year after graduation students in high SD group were more likely to have moved from where they went to high school. This was also true three years after graduation.
 - Three years after high school students with high SD were significantly more likely to be living independently than those with low SD.
 - For students who were employed, students with high SD made statistically significant advances in obtaining job benefits, including vacation, sick leave, and health insurance than did those in the low SD group.

Research on Self-Determination

- Sowers & Powers (1995)
 - Students who received self-determination instruction increased their participation and independence in performing community activities.
- Wehmeyer & Schwartz (1998)
 - People with intellectual disabilities who are more self-determined experience a higher quality of life.

Research on Components of Self-Determination

- Persons who are involved in setting educational goals are more successful in achieving those goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
- Incorporating choice-making opportunities in interventions to reduce problem behaviors results in improved behavioral outcomes (Shogren, Faggella-Luby, Bae, & Wehmeyer, 2004).
- Promoting choice-making opportunities in vocational tasks increased engagement in the activities. (Watanbe & Sturmey, 2003).

National Perspective on Self-Determination

- Established and grew in late 80's, early 90's.
- Emphasis grew in response to outcome studies, - and advocacy. Federal funds helped it grow.
- Special education and rehabilitation legislation changed to reflect the emerging emphasis on self-determination.

Why is self-determination important?

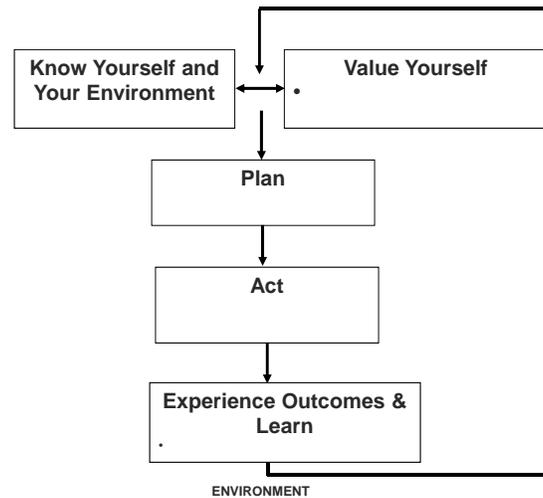
Increased self-determination leads to

- Greater resiliency
- Increased happiness

Knowledge, Skills and Beliefs for Self-Determination

- To help students develop the knowledge, skills and beliefs for self-determination the first step is to identify the knowledge, skills and beliefs that students need to further develop to increase their self-determination.

Self-Determination Model



Know Yourself and Your Environment

- Dream
- Know your strengths, weaknesses, needs, and preferences
- Know the 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

What makes us resilient?

- To increase their resilience, the American Psychological Association advises children to:
 - Have friends and be a friend.
 - Believe in yourself and what you know you can do.
 - Take charge of your behavior and actions.
 - Look at the bright side.
 - Set new goals and make a plan to reach them.

Source: Monitor on Psychology, September, 2003, pp. 30-31.

What makes us happy?

- Quality of life is increased when life activities engage one's skills and interests: *flow*
- Positive, nurturing relationships
- Faith

Source "The funds, friends and faith of happy people" by David Myers, American Psychologist, January, 2000.

It is hard to develop an authentic sense of self when there is constant pressure to adopt a socially facile, highly competitive, performance-oriented, unblemished 'self' that is promoted by omnipresent adults....Parents pressure their children to be outstanding, while neglecting the very process by which outstanding children are formed."

*Madeline Levine
The Price of Privilege*

How do we help students

- Discover their interests, passions, strengths and weaknesses?
- Set and work toward goals that are important to them?
- Reflect on and learn from their experiences?

[Supporting Self-Determination]

- Cornerstone strategies
- Direct instruction
- Academic coaching

[Some strategies to increase our self-determination]

- Explore.
- Reflect.
- Be mindful.
- Start small.
- Find support.
- Make a new friend or connect with an old one.
- Keep a gratitude list.
- Remember that all experiences have the opportunity to be learning experiences.