

Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

What Technology Specialists
Need to Know

Competency

6.2.5. Explain the rationale for providing opportunity for student self-advocacy

Objectives

- To gain knowledge of Florida definitions and practices regarding self-determination and self-advocacy
- To develop an understanding of key legislation impacting self-determination and self-advocacy for secondary students
- To identify supporting research and resources
- To identify strategies for personal use to assist students with embracing and applying self-determination and self-advocacy skills

“Choice, not chance, determines destiny.”

- Unknown



Self-Determination is...

...the process of taking control and making decisions that affect one's life.

Self-Determination helps students

- make their own choices
- set their own goals
- manage their own lives
- participate in decision making.

Self-Advocacy...

...is defined as the ability to speak and act on behalf of one's self and is an important skill for students in school settings, including Transition IEP meetings, and in post-school adult life.

Self-Determination Components...

- Choice-making skills
- Decision-making skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Goal-setting and attainment skills
- Independence, risk-taking and safety skills
- Self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement skills

...Self-Determination Components

- Self-instruction skills
- Self-advocacy and leadership skills
- Internal locus of control
- Positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy
- Self-awareness and knowledge

Dolls, Sands, Wehmeyer, & Palmer, 1996

Why this is so important for students with disabilities...

- Secondary Reform (A++)
 - Career Education (self-awareness and knowledge)
 - Determining High School Major Area of Interest
 - Choosing courses of study
- IDEA 2004 and Florida State Board of Education Rule
 - Selecting Diploma Option
 - Developing Desired Post-School Outcome Statement and Measurable Postsecondary Goals
 - Choosing courses of study
 - Participating in IEP meetings
 - Sharing and advocating for needed accommodations, including assistive technology

Starting Early

- Better prepares students to make critical life choices, participate in their IEP meetings and advocate for self in all settings (home, school, community)
- Some Florida school districts are beginning to provide formal instruction in self-determination and self-advocacy as early as Pre-K.

Florida: Age 14 Requirement

“...Consideration of instruction or the provision of information in the area of self-determination to assist the student to be able to actively and effectively participate in IEP meetings and self-advocate, if appropriate.”

ESE Rule 6A-6.03028, Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities (7) (i) 3.

What Some Districts are Doing:

Example 1

- identifying the student's priority educational needs (e.g., self-advocacy skills, goal setting, decision making, etc.); and
- developing relevant measurable annual goals in the Transition IEP to address the needs.

Example 2

- adding a line to the Transition IEP to note how instruction will be provided and/or information disseminated; and
- including samples of the student's completed activities (e.g., *Standing Up for Me* worksheets) in the student's portfolio.

Strategies for Delivering Instruction/Information:

- identify and integrate self-determination curriculum into existing courses,
- facilitate person-centered planning groups, and
- develop/access and disseminate fact sheets and related websites providing information on self-determination.

Differences: Secondary and Postsecondary

■ IDEA

- Secondary Education
 - Entitlement

■ ADA/Section 504/Section 508

- Postsecondary Education or Training and Employment
 - Students must self-identify, prove services are needed and self-advocate for necessary accommodations/supports, including assistive technology (AT).

If students are to be successful in postsecondary settings, they must embrace and apply self-determination and self-advocacy skills!

Research: Global

A study conducted with more than 1500 successful people from business, science, sports, and the arts, revealed that **“successful people in any field excel at making decisions, self-managing their behavior, and adapting to changing circumstances.”**

- Garfield, 1986

Research: Empowerment. Graduation, Decision-Making

Statistically significant and positive outcomes were found for 176 students across four states and six different assessment tools.

Results included a **47% increase in student empowerment, 52% increase in the high school completion rate** over a three year period...after only six weeks of instruction.

Students felt more confident in reaching their goals and also were more likely to talk about their interests and share their dreams for the future.

- Martin and Huber Marshall, 1999

Research: Drop-Out

“McMillian and Reed (1994) found that some students without disabilities could be classified as at-risk, but developed "resilient" (**self-determination**) **characteristics and coping skills that enabled them to succeed in school rather than dropping out of school.**”

As cited in Landmark, L.J. and Zhang, D., 2006

Research: Outcomes

“...students whose scores in high school indicated a higher level of self-determination were more likely to have experienced a greater number of positive adult outcomes, including a higher likelihood of being employed and earning more per hour than those who were not self-determined.”

- Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997

Research: Postsecondary

“Self-advocacy and self-determination are considered among the most important skills for students with disabilities to possess when seeking access into postsecondary educational programs; **the need to understand one’s disability and be able to advocate for needed supports and accommodations are critical skills for success.**”

- National Center for the Study of
Postsecondary Education Supports, 2000

Research: Postsecondary

“Federal policy at the secondary school level should incorporate requirements for the development of self-advocacy, self-awareness and self-determination knowledge and skills for youth with disabilities, ensuring effective preparation for post-school environments.”

- Stodden, Jones, and Chang, 2002

Strategies for Technology Specialists

- Become familiar with and share information on differences between IDEA, ADA and Section 504 particularly with regard to accessing and using assistive technology.
- Facilitate use of accommodations, including assistive technology, that are similar to those allowed in postsecondary settings.
- Ensure that students are aware of their needs and how they can obtain assistance in educational and postsecondary settings.
- Encourage students to actively participate in Transition IEP team meetings and to share information on their AT needs and preferences.
- Provide opportunities that facilitate development and application of component self-determination skills.

- Adapted from Stodden & Jones, n.d.

Critical Strategies for Students...

Before leaving school:

- Develop an understanding of disability, including strengths, limits, needs.
- Learn self-determination and self-advocacy skills and apply them in all environments (e.g., home, school, community).
- Learn about postsecondary options, requirements for disability documentation, and resources available at postsecondary institutions of interest, including assistive technology.

...Critical Strategies for Students

When accessing and pursuing postsecondary education, training or employment:

- Self-identify in order to receive necessary and allowable postsecondary services (e.g., waiver of certain entry requirements, provision of accommodations, including AT).
- Provide documentation of disability, including portfolios, assessments, needed accommodations/AT, etc.
- Self-advocate in order to receive allowable postsecondary services and supports (e.g., accommodations, including AT).

Florida's Self-Determination Initiative (1998 - Present)

- Information on Self-Determination
- Integration of Self-Determination into General Curriculum
- Instructional Strategies
- Curriculum and Training
 - *Standing Up for Me* (Primary, Intermediate, Middle, and High School Lessons)
 - ❖ Supplements (Health Care Transition, Significant Disabilities, Adults)
 - Person-Centered Planning
 - Other free and commercial products

What can I do?

- Get involved early. (Students must identify their desired post-school outcomes, make their diploma decision, choose courses of study and select major areas of interest in the 8th grade. Provide information and resources, so that students can make informed decisions.)
- Attend IEP and Transition IEP meetings if the student has AT needs and encourage students to self-advocate for their AT needs and preferences.
- Work with students, families, service providers and postsecondary educators and/or employers to coordinate services and AT for a smooth transition from school to post-school settings.

Resources

- <http://www.thetransitioncenter.org/self-deter.htm>
 - Websites
 - Instructional Materials (Curriculum, Assessments, Books)
 - Practical Strategies for Teaching Self-Determination Skills
- Coming soon: links to additional websites/articles

For additional information:

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www.thetransitioncenter.org