Self-Determination: A strategy for enhancing postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities

Patricia Lynch
Juana Vaquero
Cheryl Grenwelge

Texas A&M University
Bryan Independent School District

NCCEP/ GEAR UP Annual Conference
Washington, DC / July 20, 2010
1. Incidence of disabilities
2. Challenges
3. Self-Determination
5. Preliminary Data
6. Discussion
7. Questions
Bryan ISD GEAR UP

Our grant

• Provides services to 1,050 students from the class of 2014
• 73 students receive special education services
• 10 students receive services under 504

Goals

• Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in post-secondary education
• Improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities
• Youth with disabilities in secondary schools be provided with transition services
  – activities that are designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities
  – including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation
In 2007-08, 13% (6.6 million) of children and youth received special education services (NCES 2010-028)
What proportion of students enrolled in postsecondary education has a disability?

Findings from longitudinal study with a sample of 1,200 students with disabilities ages 13-18 noted that

- 39% of high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education
- 9% of students who dropped out of high school enrolled in postsecondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational, business or technical school</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year/ community college</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year college</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors Related to Academic Achievement

- Are less likely to be academically qualified for admission to a 4-year college
  - More likely to have taken remedial mathematics and English courses in high school,
  - Less likely to have taken advanced placement courses
  - Had lower high school GPAs, and lower average SAT scores
  - Dropout rate (28%-43%)

Factors Related to Academic Achievement (contd.)

- School administrators, teachers and had low academic expectations for students with disabilities
- Teachers working with students with disabilities believe that skills related to self-determination (e.g., problem solving, goal setting) are too complex for their students to learn
- Parents are less confident their youth will attend postsecondary school


Challenges in postsecondary education

Environmental factors
- Expectations
- Information access
- Availability of social support systems
- Accessibility of faculty
- No more support from IDEA

Individual factors
- Autonomy
- Problem solving skills
- Persistence
“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. (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer, 1998, p. 2)
Self-Determination

Refers to “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, 1996, p. 24)

Self-determined individuals know how to choose, they know what they want and how to get it.
Why is it beneficial?

• Research has shown that the acquisition of self-determination skills increases student involvement in education planning and leads to more positive educational outcomes.

• People who are self-determined have better postsecondary outcomes (Izzo & Lamb, 2002; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).

• Self-determination has been linked to better mental health (Bruno, 2000).
What does Self-Determination mean to students?

- Participating in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Knowing their rights
- Asking for help
- Being able to talk about their strength and weakness
- Planning and following through with goals
- Advocating for needed accommodations
What does Self-Determination mean to parents?

- Helping the student become autonomous
- Discussing the student’s disability
- Helping the student began planning for life
- Focusing on the student's interests and goals
- Assisting their student to become familiar with resources they can access such as the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Service Agency
What does Self-Determination mean to educators?

- Understanding the importance of SD
- Providing opportunities for student to use SD skills
- Incorporating SD skills in lesson plans
- Using more student-directed learning strategies
- Teach students to identify and set goals
What is Bryan ISD GEAR UP doing to prepare its students with disabilities?

• Providing training to special education teachers on self-determination
• Parent workshops
• Informing our students about academic opportunities
• Training was provided to secondary special education teachers in Bryan ISD
  – 4 individually trained at middle schools
  – 50 at a district workshop
• Teachers were given a curriculum of 13 lessons
• 40 students with mild-moderate disabilities were given a self-determination measure
**Student Demographics**

- **Gender:** 34 males, 6 females
- **Ethnicity:** 20 African American, 10 Hispanic, 9 White, 1 Asian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Disability</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory Impairment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Impairment / Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AIR Self-Determination Scale – assess and develop a profile of students' level of self-determination

Figure 2. Framework for the AIR Self-Determination Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CAPACITY</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THINKING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and express own interests, needs, abilities.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set expectations and goals to meet needs, interests.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make choices and plans to meet goals, expectations.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take actions to complete plans.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJUSTING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate results of actions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alter plans and actions, if necessary, to meet goals more effectively.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The AIR Self-Determination Scale was developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with Teachers College, Columbia University, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement HO23J200005
Instruments (contd.)

• **SD Scenarios** - Students were given a survey that consisted of 4 short answers questions and 3 matching questions.

• The questions measure the student’s problem solving and other self-determination skills
  
  • *You have wanted to get a job after school at the local department store, but your parents do not think that you are ready to be working. They think that you need to enjoy being a kid and have fun with your friends. You think that they are trying to baby you still, so you want to prove to them that you can handle a job. What do you?*
AIR Self-Determination Level

- Mean: 89.08 (Maximum 120)
- Range: 35-115

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-50%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-70%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-90%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-100%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-120%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre/Post Data on SD Scenarios

Pre (40 students)
  – Mean: 10.5 (Maximum 20)
  – Range: 0-18

Post (36 students)
  – Mean: 11.22 (Maximum 20)
  – Range: 2-18

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Preliminary Data-Teacher Survey

• Surveyed 54 teachers-3 responded
• Teacher Response to Survey
  - Need More Training in Self-Determination
  - Did not have time to implement
  - Believed SD was important for students
Barriers and concerns

- Limited use of SD Curriculum
- Possible negative impact for GEAR-UP students (lacking SD skills)
- Preliminary data is just an SD Baseline since students did not receive SD instruction
- Need better assessments for non-verbal and Deaf students
- Mobility of students - may be missing some
Future needs

• Provide self-determination training and support to high school teachers
• Find a way to provide training to students receiving services under Section 504
• Provide training and support to families regarding self-determination
• Provide information to families about post-secondary options for students with disabilities
Discussion/Questions/Suggestions
Resources

• Transition to College
  http://www.transitiontocollege.net/index.htm

• National Postschool Outcome Center
  http://www.psocenter.org