

Research Highlights

Topic: Self-Determination

Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Agran, M., Mithaug D. E., & Martin, J. E. (2000). Promoting causal agency: The self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction. *Exceptional Children*, 66, 439-453.

BOTTOM LINE

Findings from a field-test of *The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction* given to 21 teachers and 40 students indicate that the model of teaching enhanced students' self-determination. A lack of self-determination in children and youths with disabilities has been cited as preventing adequate integration into mainstream society. Increased self-determination—such as that resulting from specific decision-making skills learned with *The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction*—allows youths to be causal agents in their own lives, which improves independence and individual growth.

TIPS

- Educators who wish to provide self-determination instruction and practice to their students can begin to do so by giving students choices and asking them what it is they would like to accomplish on a regular basis.
- Involve students in educational planning and decision-making in order to build capacity for self-determination and abilities for adult living.

KEY FINDINGS

- A number of teachers who participated in this research planned on continuing *The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction* next year due to their positive experience with it during field-testing.
- Of the students instructed using the model, 55 percent achieved or exceeded their educational goals.

KEY FINDINGS

cont.

- More than 30 percent of teacher ratings of students' progress using the model indicated that students exceeded goal expectations.
- Students participating in instruction using the model not only attained or exceeded educational goals, but also exhibited increased self-determination.

METHOD

- Twenty-one teachers in two states were trained in self-determination, student-directed learning, and *The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction*. These teachers each selected one to three students with disabilities, for a total of 40 students, to participate in the instruction model.
- While teachers utilized the model to teach the selected students, students themselves identified 43 goals that the model was to address. Of these 43, 10 focused on acquiring or modifying social skills, 13 focused on behavioral issues, and 20 focused on academic requirements.
- After instruction was complete, teachers scored student progress on each goal. This scoring was then analyzed for model efficacy.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Hughes, C., Copeland, S. R., Agran, M., Wehmeyer, M. L., Rodi, M. S., & Presley, J. A. (2002). Using self-monitoring to improve performance in general education high school classes. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 37*, 262-271.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). *Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities: Basic skills for successful transition*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Wehmeyer, M.L., Agran, M., Palmer, S., Mithaug, D., & Blanchard, C. (1998). *A teachers guide to the use of The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction: Adolescent version*. Arlington, TX: The Arc of the United States.

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