# Research Highlights

**Topic: Self-Determination**


## Bottom Line

A national survey of teachers of students with intellectual disabilities was conducted to seek their opinion regarding the value of self-determination skills and the issues related to teaching these skills. Findings indicated that a majority of teachers think self-determination is an important instructional area, yet the degree of implementing these strategies was mixed. There is a need to move from acknowledgement of the importance of self-determination to specific methods, materials and instructional strategies that can enhance training in self-determination.

## Tips

- Everyday events provide excellent opportunities for encouraging self-determination, e.g. selecting clothing, selecting food, selecting activities to do, deciding to use self-instruction in conversation, etc.

- There are many curriculum guides available for supporting self-determination. No one curriculum will fit each individual’s needs, but parts and pieces from several can provide tools that will lead to success for any given person.

## Key Findings

- Teachers working with secondary-age students are generally familiar with the self-determination construct; they have primarily learned about self-determination through journal articles.

- Teachers do not have sufficient training or information on promoting this outcome. There continues to be the need to disseminate information about existing methods, materials, and strategies that enable teachers to promote self-determination and develop new strategies.
KEY FINDINGS

cont.

• Teachers frequently cited that their students with severe disabilities would not benefit from instruction in self-determination and are less likely to learn complex skills like decision-making or problem solving.

• Respondents who teach students with severe disabilities indicated that students need instruction in other areas more urgently than in self-determination.

• Teachers of students with mild disabilities were much more likely to use self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-instruction, and goal-setting strategies than were teachers of students with severe disabilities. Teachers in both groups were equally likely to use self-scheduling.

• Teachers of students with severe disabilities were more likely to use self-reinforcement and antecedent due regulation.

• There is a need to have policies to support self-determination in the schools and to ensure that self-determination-related goals and objectives are incorporated into the students’ IEPs and transition plans.

• One third of the respondents did not involve students in educational planning and decision-making.

METHOD

• A total of 1,219 teachers (from all 50 states and 2 U.S. territories), who were responsible for designing and implementing the educational program of students with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21, completed a survey.

• The majority of respondents were trained as a special educator. The instructional environment most frequently reported was a separate class, followed by a regular class, and then a resource room.

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This research was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Research. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: Beachcenter@ku.edu. Website: www.beachcenter.org.

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