

Research Highlights

Topic: Self-Determination

Wehmeyer, M., & Schwartz, M. (1997). Self-Determination and positive adult outcomes: A follow-up study of youth with mental retardation or learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 245-255.

BOTTOM LINE

Eighty former students with cognitive disabilities participated in a follow-up study that measured their adult outcomes one year after graduation from high school. Analysis of the data revealed that self-determined students had a greater likelihood of more positive adult outcomes, such as being employed at a higher rate and earning more than peers who are not self-determined. Transition services should promote self-determination using student-directed planning, decision making, and program development to promote choice and decision-making for life as an adult.

TIPS

- Support students to have early and frequent practice in making decisions and solving problems. Be sure to provide feedback that will help them improve their skills in these areas.
- Students will benefit from setting short and long-term goals, observing and measuring their own progress, and evaluating their progress. Begin with short-term goals that are easily obtained and measured until the student is more comfortable with the process.
- Include self-determination goals and skills in educational and transition planning, including the assessment of resources, communication skills, and goal and problem setting.

TIPS

- Self-Determined students with cognitive disabilities showed more success in adult outcomes, specifically employment, than did adults with fewer self-determination skills.
- Component elements for the acquisition of self-determination were identified. These skills were linked to instructional practices and educational and transition planning.

METHOD

- Eighty students with cognitive disabilities, ages 17 to 22, who would be leaving school at the completion of the 1994-1995 school year, answered questions in another study about self-determination while in school.
- One year later these former students responded to a follow-up survey. The survey given in this study gathered information about adult outcomes such as employment and transportation.
- Information on students' age, IQ, and other demographic information was obtained and used in the analyses of the data.

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.

King-Sears, M. E. (1999). Teacher and researcher co-design self-management content for an inclusive setting: Research training, intervention, and generalization effects on student performance. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 34*, 134-156.

Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). *Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities: Basic skills for successful transition*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

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