

2020

## Examining Self-Determination Skills Training for Students with Disabilities to Improve Postsecondary Outcomes

Felicia Ann Burton  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education

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Felicia A. Burton

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

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by

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MA, California State University, Dominguez Hills, 2009

BS, California State University, Dominguez Hills, 2006

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2020

## Abstract

Individuals with mild disabilities are graduating high school and struggling to succeed in higher education and the workplace. An examination of how educators prepare students to develop the necessary skills for successful postsecondary outcomes was warranted in a western state to improve the success rate for individuals with mild disabilities. The framework for this project study was Wehmeyer and Schwartz' theoretical framework for promoting enhanced self-determination as a means of achieving positive postsecondary outcomes. The research question guiding the study focused on how educators in a school district helped students with mild disabilities develop self-determination skills. The research design was a qualitative case study. Twelve high school teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer were invited to participate in this study, utilizing semistructured interviews as one avenue to collect data for this study. Interview data were recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed to develop common themes. Students' Individual Transition Plans were collected and analyzed, using a thematic analysis with open coding, to identify transition goals and any gaps in transition goals related to self-determination. The findings from this study indicated that these special educators' lacked experiences with self-determination skills training which led them to feel underprepared to adequately instruct their students on how to develop self-determination skills. A 3-day professional development series was developed as a project to address these findings. The project could lead to improved post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities in the areas of education and employment, resulting in social change through sustained student employment and positive educational outcomes.

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## Dedication

The journey to obtaining my doctoral degree has been an arduous journey. I have had many roadblocks which could have easily given me justified cause to quit. However, I was determined. I was determined to prove to myself, my family, and my students that if you set your mind towards completing and reaching your goal, no matter what obstacles are placed before you, if you believe in yourself, you will reach your journey.

My husband Dave did not live to see me reach this goal; however, he has been a major factor in my determination to reach this goal of obtaining my doctoral degree. My children, Christopher, Melanie, and Charles were also major influences in my completion of this journey. I have always set the tone of success for my children. Never give up, no matter what. Set your sights higher and you will reach that epoch moment. My lovely grandchildren: Cameron, Christle, and CJ. I sacrificed time with them to complete this goal; however, they never complained. As I worked on my papers, they were always on their best behavior during this time, just for me, and I greatly appreciate it.

My students whom I have had the privilege to teach were an inspiration for me throughout the doctoral process. Whenever I got tired, felt like giving up, or just throwing in the towel, my students came to mind. I realized, I am not doing this for me but for every student I have taught or will teach. If I learned anything through this entire doctoral process, I knew that it would be worth its weight in gold to pass it on for the benefit of all students with special educational needs. Thank you, to all my family, friends, co-workers, and students for your faith and belief in me. A special thanks to my special education administrator. All your on-going support has helped me to reach my goal; therefore, I celebrate this accomplishment with all of you.

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I want to my family members, Charles, Melanie, Christopher, Christle, Cameron, and CJ thank you for supporting me as I traveled this course. I know many times I was not available; however, you supported me every step of the way. I could not have done this without all of you. I love you beyond words. To all my colleagues, and friends who encouraged me to not give up, I thank you. Without all of you believing in me, I could not have completed this doctoral program.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004, mandated transition services for students with disabilities beginning at the age of 16 years (34 CFR 300.320 (b) and (c) [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)]). Transition services are defined as “activities for a child with a disability that are designed to improve academic and functional achievement and movement from school to postsecondary activities in the areas of education, employment, independent living, and community involvement” (20 U.S.C. § 1401 Sec. 602[34]). Despite the implementation of transition activities aimed towards improving postsecondary outcomes in employment, researchers have indicated that individuals with disabilities are faring worse than individuals without disabilities (Heasley, 2015).

While transition services have been mandated to improve postsecondary outcomes for individuals with disabilities, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) and the National Council on Disability (2011) showed low graduation rates and poor employment rates for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD, 2009) reported continuing rates of unemployment, along with limited opportunities for employment for individuals with disabilities. Findings such as these point to a need to research proven, evidence-based transition practices (Sprunger, Harvey, & Quick, 2018) as a means of improving the

postsecondary outcomes in education and employment for individuals with disabilities. Federal legislature has provided some guidance for education agencies to support their efforts in transition planning for individuals with disabilities.

The history of providing support and funding for transition services has evolved over the years. While the United States Constitution does not specifically mention education, Article 1, Section 8, together with the Tenth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, provide the basis for the federal government's involvement in educational policy (Fowler, Hulett, & Kieff, 2009). As a result, throughout the years, the federal government has passed federal legislature as an avenue to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. For example, in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) established and reaffirmed the school's responsibility to provide appropriate education, training, and programs for students with disabilities and ensure that these students are educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible.

While students with disabilities were being educated along with their nondisabled peers, the poor outcomes these students had once they exited high school was brought to the attention of lawmakers. In 1983, P.L. 98-199 was passed to authorize transition services for students with disabilities. Since that time, the meaning attached to transition services continue to be argued by many researchers (Barnard-Brak, Schmidt, Wei, Hodges, & Robinson, 2013; Carter, Brock, & Trainor, 2014; Cimera, Burgess, &

Bedesem, 2014; Trainor, Morningstar, & Murray, 2016). As a result, how transition services and planning are implemented varies among practitioners.

To comply with the mandate regarding transition, special education practitioners include as part of their curriculum instruction, activities to promote successful transition from high school to postsecondary life. These activities include postsecondary education research, employment and career assessments, and employment research. While these activities do provide some benefit to students with mild disabilities, the ideal situations under which these activities are taught are not reminiscent of what students may encounter as they begin their postsecondary lives in higher education or employment. The purpose of this study is to learn how individuals with mild disabilities are helped to develop the skills needed to have successful postsecondary adult outcomes in education and employment. The findings from this study could aid special educators in their practices as they work to prepare their students with for postsecondary life after high school, as well as attain more positive adult outcomes.

An important aspect of transition planning for individuals with disabilities is their active, meaningful participation in the transition process. Researchers have indicated that individuals with disabilities are less involved in the transition process and many times parents have become the sole decision-maker (Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004). This becomes problematic, especially for individuals who have attained the age of the majority and their educational rights. Decision-making is now becoming the responsibility of the individuals with a disability. Lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with how to navigate



the system, unaware of where to go for assistance, what questions to ask, and of whom, makes transition to adult life a difficult process for many individuals with disabilities.

The mandate to address transition for individuals with disabilities has become a challenge to many practitioners due to recent legislation and the Common Core State Standards. As a result, transition planning has been de-emphasized in favor of academic achievement, such as meeting A – G requirements for college entrance (Bartholomew, Test, Cooke, & Cease-Cook, 2015). With the focus for all students, including those with a disability, being on academics (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; No Child Left Behind, 2002; Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2010; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010), instruction on identifying postsecondary goals for students with disabilities is lacking (Bartholomew et al., 2015). Lack of transition instruction for individuals with disabilities presents a major problem. Bartholomew, Test, Cooke, and Cease-Cook (2015) argued that providing transition instruction is one way to combat the poor postsecondary outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Without adequate instruction and preparation for individuals with disabilities and those with special educational needs, their outcomes will not likely change.

Adding to the problems related to the lack of transition planning for many individuals with disabilities is the lack of teacher training to adequately involve students in the transition process (Wandry et al., 2008). Some secondary teachers have even reported having less knowledge of what a strong transition program looks like (Sprunger et al., 2018). This lack of knowledge added to the problem of poor outcomes for

individuals with disabilities. Morningstar and Benitez (2013) argued that strong transition programs can support individuals with disabilities move towards independence and competence. Gothberg et al. (2015) advocated strongly for the implementation of nonacademic skills through transition planning to prepare individuals with disabilities for postsecondary life. Targeted instruction in academic and vocational coursework has also been shown to improve the likelihood of more positive successes in postsecondary education and employment (Papay & Bambara, 2014). These instructional practices have been identified as common best practices in transition (Kohler & Field, 2003; Papay & Bambara, 2014; Test et al., 2009).

### **The Local Problem**

There are students in high school with mild disabilities who are not having successful transitions from high school to postsecondary education or employment. Neubert and Leconte (2013) argued that students with disabilities face challenges as they transition from secondary school to postsecondary education or employment. Current researchers also argued that many of the methods of transition planning have not been shown to be effective in influencing postsecondary outcomes of individuals with disabilities (Fullarton & Duquette, 2015; Henniger & Taylor, 2014; Miller-Warren, 2016). This problem has also been identified by researchers who supported the idea that students with disabilities experience diminished postsecondary outcomes when compared to their peers without disabilities (Haber et al., 2016; Trainor et al., 2016). Gothberg,

Peterson, Peak, and Sedaghat (2015) also argued that a gap in practice related to postsecondary readiness for students with disabilities continues to exist.

Wehmeyer (2015) asserted that some students with disabilities demonstrated less self-determination than their peers, which could be one reason why these students are not having successful transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment. Furthermore, Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenburg, and Little (2015) determined that the self-determination status of students as they exit high school predicts positive outcomes 1 and 2 years post high school. Shogren et al. (2015) also asserted that the main reasons to study the self-determination status of students with disabilities was in part due to the relationship that exists between instruction in self-determination and adult outcomes, and higher levels of self-determination when exiting high school often results in more positive adult outcomes. Wehmeyer and Abery (2013) argued that despite these types of findings there is still a gap in practice and literature pertaining to self-determination skills needed for successful adult outcomes and that too few evidence-based practices are in use for students with disabilities addressing this gap.

### **Rationale**

The problem with unsuccessful transitioning from secondary schooling to successful postsecondary adult life is also affecting students with mild disabilities in an urban high school on the coast of southern California where this study took place. D. Ide, a special education transition specialist in the focus district, expressed concerns with the transitioning outcomes for students she services (personal communication, January 12,

2017). She also feels the biggest gap for students with disabilities is the lack of skills in self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-determination. She believes the students need to be prepared to take charge of their own lives, such as learning their social security numbers and addresses and how to make their own decisions (personal communication, May 30, 2017). R. Todd, a job developer in the focus district, expressed similar concerns regarding students with mild disabilities being able to successfully transition into the workplace or secondary education after completion of their secondary schooling (personal communication, January 12, 2017).

According to the local school setting counselor at the focus school, there were 226 students who could have graduated in the 2015 school year, which included 44 students with disabilities. A total of 168 students graduated and only 19 were students with disabilities. There were 25 students with disabilities who did not graduate nor enter postsecondary education or begin employment. Sixteen of the 25 nongraduating students were reported as either dropouts or whereabouts unknown and 11 returned to the focus school as fifth-year seniors (M. Raymond-Foy, personal communication, February 21, 2017). There were only six students with disabilities out of the 19 who graduated from the local setting who entered post-secondary education or began employment. (J. Lopez and N. Gonzalez, personal communication, February 21, 2017). The outcomes of the remaining 13 graduating students were unknown at the writing of this dissertation.

The purpose of this qualitative project study was to examine how special education teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer assist students with mild

disabilities to develop self-determination skills and the strategies that are implemented when seeking to develop the self-determination skills in students with mild disabilities. Information collected through semistructured interviews with special education teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer and data from Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs) were used to identify current transition teaching practices related to self-determination skills training that affect successful transition outcome rates and to inform the development of a project.

### **Definition of Terms**

In this study, the following terms and definitions will be used:

*Age of the majority:* defined as a legal term which refers to the age which an individual is no longer considered a minor, which in most states occur at the age of 18 years (Peterson, Van Dycke, Roberson, & Sedaghat, 2013).

*Best practices:* refers to several factors deemed as fundamental in planning and providing transition support for individuals with disabilities (Papay et al., 2014).

*Evidence-based practices (EBP):* defined as instructional approaches supported by numerous research studies and have met rigorous standards in design, methodology, and magnitude of effect (Crockett, Billingsley, & Boscardin, 2012). EBP have undergone a review process to determine their level of evidence and have established a proven record for improving student outcomes (Mazzotti, Rowe, Cameto, Test, & Morningstar, 2013).

*Postsecondary education*: defined as education after the completion of a prescribed course of studies in a secondary educational institute.

*Postsecondary employment*: defined as employment obtained after completion of a secondary education course of study.

*Promising practices*: defined as practices, although based on research, have shown limited success by implementation of weak research designs (Mazzotti et al., 2013).

*Reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004)*: shifts the age at which transition services begin and stresses the accountability with local education agencies for improving transition outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Kochhar-Bryant, Shaw, & Izzo, 2014).

*Research-based practices*: defined as research practices based on rigorous designs and have a demonstrated a record of success in improving the outcomes of students (Mazzotti et al., 2013).

*Secondary education*: defined as education in Grades 7 through 12.

*Self-determination*: defined as a construct within the structure of human behavior, where individuals become “actors in their own lives, rather than being acted upon,” (Wehmeyer, 2014; Wehmeyer & Abery, 2013, p. 178). Martinis (2015) takes this definition and places it in colloquial language and refers to self-determination as “a person’s authority and opportunity to make life choices” (p. 221).

*Special education*: defined as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability” (PL94-142, § 602(25)).

*Special education practitioners*: defined as individuals holding state credentials authorizing them to educate individuals with disabilities.

*Transition services and planning*: defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) as “a coordinated set of activities that are results oriented and focuses on facilitating the movements of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities in the areas of post-secondary education, employment, and where applicable, independent living.”

### **Significance of the Study**

According to the United States Department of Labor (2012), individuals with disabilities are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education and more likely to be unemployed than their peers without disabilities and less likely to graduate from secondary education. Poor postsecondary outcomes affect students with disabilities in the areas of employability, higher education, independent living, and in becoming productive members of society (Webb, Repetto, Seabrooks-Blackmore, Patterson, & Alderfer, 2014). The goal of transition planning for students with disabilities is to effectively participate in planning and preparing for their own futures beyond high school (Wehman et al., 2014), and enable students with disabilities to be better prepared for their postsecondary environments (Prince, Plotner, & Yell, 2014).

A study of the transition teaching practices related to self-determination skills training in the local educational setting can benefit students with mild disabilities. Effective transition teaching practices benefit students with mild disabilities by helping them learn skills needed to prepare for challenges they will face as they enter postsecondary education and employment, and to seek out and use the available disability specific supports (Newman, Madaus, & Javitz, 2016). Students with mild disabilities can become more independent and are able to persist and adapt to the demands of postsecondary education with specific training and supports (Bell, Devecchi, McGuckin, & Shevlin, 2017). A study of effective transition teaching practices related to self-determination skills instruction can also build the capacity of students with mild disabilities, so they will be able to secure gainful employment and persist with the job over time (Shogren et al., 2015).

Parents of students with mild disabilities benefit from knowing that their students are being prepared to enter postsecondary education or employment as well-prepared individuals with mild disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016). Special education teachers at the local educational setting can also benefit from this study on transition teaching practices related to instruction in self-determination skills training. These educators were recipients of current, research-based information related to transition planning for students with mild disabilities from secondary education to postsecondary adult life (Hamblet, 2014; Mazzotti et al., 2013).



The information provided through this project study can also benefit special education teachers as they examine their current classroom transition teaching practices. By examining their own practices associated with self-determination skills training for students with mild disabilities, teachers can determine if their practices align with current research-based information. The local community can also benefit as individuals with mild disabilities enter society as productive citizens, living and contributing to their communities by being gainfully employed (Hoover, 2016), which ultimately promotes positive social change within the community.

### **Research Question**

There continues to be disappointing outcomes for individuals with disabilities after they exit high school (Cimera et al., 2014). Postsecondary life for many individuals with disabilities has been challenging and has yielded poor outcomes for many in the areas of education and employment (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). This problem has affected many individuals with mild disabilities, including students at the local site. The purpose of this project study was to investigate how special education teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer assisted students with mild disabilities at the local site to develop self-determination skills for successful postsecondary outcomes, which led to the following research question:

Research Question: How do high school special education teachers, a job developer, and a transition specialist assist student with mild disabilities to develop self-

determination skills as an avenue towards more successful postsecondary adult outcomes?

Subquestion: How do students' Individualized Transition Plans (ITP's) reflect self-determination skills support for students with mild disabilities?

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction**

Self-determination is a construct used to define human behavior. The implication is that individuals take charge of their own lives, giving the individual authority and the opportunity to make choices in their own lives (Martinis, 2015; Wehmeyer, 2014; Wehmeyer & Abery, 2013). Students with mild disabilities are not having successful postsecondary outcomes after graduating high school. Therefore, an examination of the strategies being implemented to support the development of self-determination skills as a means of assisting students with mild disabilities to have better postsecondary outcomes is warranted.

To research the concept of self-determination as a viable means of improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, through my overarching research question, I sought to understand how special educators, a transition specialist, and a job developer assisted students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills. I reviewed literature related to the historical background of transition services, the role of special education teachers, families, and students in the process of transition planning.

Research studies were reviewed that contribute data regarding current transition best practices and barriers to successful transition.

An examination of postsecondary preparation through transition planning for students with mild disabilities was grounded by the Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) theory of promoting enhanced self-determination as a means of achieving positive postschool outcomes. Through first-hand interviews with teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer and data from Individualized Transition Plans, I hoped to gain insight into how educators are preparing students with mild disabilities to have more positive outcomes as they enter life after high school. As a final project, I created a professional development series to support and provide information for special educators as they conduct transition planning activities for students with mild disabilities.

Researchers have addressed and promoted developing self-determination as an evidence-based practice that has yielded positive results for students with disabilities (Van Laarhoven-Myers et al., 2016). By utilizing this approach as the framework for my study, my intent was to provide educators at the local high school with an evidence-based practice that can be shared districtwide. In addition, since the educators, families, and communities are also stakeholders in the outcomes of individuals with disabilities, my research has the potential to contribute additional insight and education to these stakeholders as a group, as well as individual classroom practice; thus, providing additional support for individuals with mild disabilities.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Wehmeyer and Schwartz's (1997) theory of self-determination supported the framework for this qualitative case study. According to the self-determination theory, individuals who are self-determined act autonomously, can regulate their own behaviors, initiates events and respond accordingly, and acts in a self-realizing manner (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). When describing an individual who acts autonomously, Wehmeyer and Schwartz asserted that "the person acts according to his or her own preferences...independently, free from undue external influence" (p. 1). Furthermore, Wehmeyer and Schwartz described self-regulated individuals as those who have the skills to formulate, enact, and evaluate an action plan when necessary. Individuals who are psychologically empowered act on their beliefs and perform the necessary behaviors in accordance with those beliefs (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Individuals, according to Wehmeyer and Schwartz are self-realizing if they know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and can utilize this knowledge in a manner that benefits them.

According to Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997), "self-determination is an important outcome for individuals with disabilities" (p. 1). Not only is self-determination important in educational outcomes, but also in employment outcomes. Individuals with high levels of self-determination reported higher wages than those with low self-determination. Wehmeyer and Schwartz concluded that individuals with high levels of self-determination appear to have more positive postsecondary outcomes in areas such as education and employment than those with low levels of self-determination. Furthermore,

Wehmeyer and Schwartz's (1997) self-determination theory is this study's conceptual framework because it provided a focus for educators when transition planning for students with mild disabilities. Additionally, Wehmeyer and Schwartz's self-determination theory was used to ground the data collection and analysis.

The literature for this study included the following: (a) an explanation of Wehmeyer and Schwartz's conceptual framework of promoting enhanced self-determination as a means of achieving positive postsecondary outcomes; (b) a brief history of transition mandates; (c) a discussions of the role of special education teachers, community partners, families, and students in the transition process; (d) a discussion of the barriers to effective transition planning; (e) an examination of current transition practices; and (f) a review of self-determination skills as a component of postsecondary success. The following databases were searched: SAGE, ProQuest, Education Research Complete, and ERIC for peer-reviewed articles, using the following key words: *postsecondary transition, postsecondary outcomes, students with disabilities, transition planning, secondary special education, transition services, and teacher role in transition services* for the years 2013 through 2017.

The problem of poor postsecondary outcomes for individuals with mild disabilities has been a matter of concern for several decades. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) reaffirmed the responsibility of schools to provide education, training, and programs for students with disabilities to make certain they are participants in their education alongside their nondisabled peers. While students

with disabilities were being educated with their peers without disabilities, their postsecondary outcomes lagged far behind their peers (Cimera et al., 2014; Joshi & Bouck, 2017; Rodriguez et al, 2017; Thoma et al., 2016). This concerned many stakeholders, including federal lawmakers.

Therefore, in 1983, P.L. 98-199 was passed authorizing transitions services be implemented for youth with disabilities as part of their educational plan. In 2004, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act strengthened transition planning by requiring that a student's individualized education program (IEP) include a statement of postsecondary goals as part of transition planning beginning at the age of 16 years (IDEA; 2004). While extant research does provide evidence that improvements have occurred in postsecondary outcomes for some individuals with mild disabilities (Trainor et al., 2016), there were still concerns that despite federal mandates, individuals with disabilities were not achieving postschool successes at a rate compared to students without disabilities (Morningstar, Lee, Lattin, & Murray, 2016). In addition, Test (2017) argued that transition mandates should not be the driving force for educators as they plan and prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary life. Postsecondary success in education and/or employment as a means of improving their quality of life after high school should be one of the driving forces and motivators for educators to provide transition services for students with disabilities.

A holistic view of transition planning combined with academic content will enable educators to both meet the transition mandates and continue to teach students with

disabilities the academic content. Bartholomew, Papay, McConnell and Cease-Cook (2015) made a similar claim. They found that teaching individuals with disabilities skills such as self-determination, employment related skills, and functional skills can improve the postschool outcomes for these individuals when the skills are aligned with the curriculum (Bartholomew et al., 2015).

### **History of Transition Mandates**

In this section, I discuss the history of transition mandates from the federal level and their impact on education environments to ensure individuals with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education based on need (Carter et al., 2014). Throughout the period of the 1980s, poor outcomes for individuals with disabilities has been documented. In fact, reporting on unemployment, in a 1983 report, the United States Commission on Civil Rights determined that “75% of adults with intellectual disabilities in the United States were unemployed” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights as cited in Cimera, Burgess, & Bedesem, 2014). These numbers made policy makers begin to pay closer attention to how individuals with disabilities were prepared for postsecondary life (Carter et al., 2014; Cimera et al., 2014; Prince et al., 2014).

Transition planning for successful postsecondary outcomes are based on legislative mandates as described in the IDEA of 2004 (Trainor et al., 2016). However, prior to that time, based on the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA (PL 105-17), a requirement that the IEP for students beginning at age 14 years include statements of transition services to be provided related to the student’s course of study and linkages to services

agencies to support their transition was mandated (Kohler & Field, 2003). Furthermore, IDEA amendments of 1990 and 1997 mandated that students act as participants in their transition planning. This meant that educators needed to be cognizant of the student's strengths, interest, preferences and needs, which would require some form of assessment be administered.

In a subsequent 2004 amendment – PL 108-447, a definition of transition services was provided and a mandate that the activities supporting movement from high school to postsecondary life be included in the student's IEP by their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, (Cimera et al., 2014; Trainor et al., 2016; Webb et al., 2014). Also, included in the IDEA 2004 was the mandate to include measurable postsecondary goals based on student interests, preferences, and strengths which could be identified through age-appropriate transition assessments (Kohler & Field, 2003; Trainor et al., 2016). While these transition mandates exist for individuals with disabilities to support their movements from high school to life after high school, there are differences in supports and services for individuals at the post-secondary level (Barnard-Brak et al., 2013; Collier et al., 2016). This places an additional responsibility on educators, families, and students in the role of transition at the postsecondary level.



## **Role of Special Education Teachers, Families, Community Partners, and Students in Transition**

### **Special Education Teachers**

Special education teachers play a significant part in the process of transitioning individuals with disabilities to postsecondary life, either as mentors or providing support (Fullarton & Duquette, 2015). Special education teachers write student's IEPs and within the content of the IEP must include one or more transition goals based on student interest (IDEA, 2004). In addition, special education teachers are obligated to design, carry out, and deliver instruction to students with disabilities, along with implementing accommodations and supports to help the student have successful learning outcomes (Kellems, Springer, Wilkins, & Anderson, 2016).

In addition to their responsibilities towards students' academics, special education teachers are obligated to address the functional needs of their students in their transition towards postschool life (Kellems et al., 2016). To do so, special education teachers complete a variety of age-appropriate transition assessments as outlined in IDEA 2004 (Petcu, Yell, Cholewicki, & Plotner, 2014). Transition assessments are a legal requirement that must be strictly adhered to. This puts the special education teacher in a different role, that of assessor.

Special education teachers must be familiar with the transition assessment process if they are to provide transition support for students with disabilities; yet researchers assert that evidence exists that many educators are unfamiliar with the transition

assessment process (Rowe, Mazzotti, Hirano, & Alverson, 2015). This assertion points towards a need for additional support for teachers in their role as assessors. Neubert and Leconte (2013) also make the assertion that the lack of knowledge related to age-appropriate transition assessment process goes beyond special educators. This is problematic in many education agencies across the states (Neubert & Leconte, 2013).

Special educators are obligated to understand the transition process, thus ensuring successful transition of students with special educational needs (Prince et al., 2014). Petcu et al. (2014) asserted that when educators understand how the courts view transition, they are in a better position to understand their legal responsibilities. In addition, educators need to acknowledge that parents are a constant in the lives of an individual with a disability (Achola & Greene, 2016) and as such should always be involved in any processes affecting the student. Again, there is a need to address this deficit in understanding of transition assessment procedures if students with special educational needs are to derive maximum benefits as they transition to life after high school (Prince et al., 2014).

### **Parents**

The role of parents in the transition process for their child with exceptional educational needs is very important. Because many students may not be intellectually competent to understand and process transition as it applies to them, parents shoulder most of the responsibility for providing needed information to school staff so that they may effectively prepare students for post-secondary life. While parents play a crucial role

in the transition process and should be viewed as members of the students IEP team, this has not been the case for some parents.

In a study conducted by Miller-Warren (2016) of mothers who took part in a transition planning study, many felt the transition planning process was inadequate, these mothers did not feel as if they were part of the process and felt they did not receive help from their child's teacher. It should be noted, that while many of the parents in the study conducted by Miller-Warren (2016) felt the transition planning process was inadequate, other researchers assert that studies examining how families define successful transition planning needs to be explored (Henninger & Taylor, 2014). As a starting point, family values should be taken into consideration.

Parents also have the role of advocate and protector for their children with exceptional needs. This role includes being involved in the process of transition planning, providing support to their students, and advocating for the needed resources that will enable their student to be successful as they transition into adult life after high school (Fullarton & Duquette, 2015). To aid parents as they advocate on behalf of their children with disabilities, Pleet-Odle et al. (2016) details several strategies and supports special educators can provide to families to aid them as they work to support and advocate for their student with exceptional needs.

Many parents have high expectations for their student with special educational needs and require the support of special educators. Researchers agree that high expectations from the home leads to higher achievement and goal setting by the student

with exceptional needs (Fullarton & Duquette, 2015; Landmark, Roberts, & Zhang, 2013; Pleet-Odle et al., 2016). Therefore, special educators want to support the expectations of parents as they work collaboratively with families during the transition planning process. However, it should always be a team endeavor, based on student needs.

### **Students**

Students with disabilities have a primary role in the planning of their transition from high school into the adult world. Information is collected to assist special educators plan and prepare for a successful transition into postsecondary life. Students should have a voice in this process. Researchers assert that when students play an active role in their own transition planning, they are practicing self-determination skills, engaging in goal setting, and preparing themselves to engage in conversation with others about their transition (Collier et. al., 2016). However, lack of knowledge regarding their own disabilities has been a hinderance to success for many students.

Parents are the primary holder of the education rights for students, and as such make educational decisions for the student (Peterson et al., 2013). However, once the student reaches the age of the majority, the education rights are transferred to the individual. IDEA (2004) mandates that this information be provided to the student and their families by the student's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and continuing at each subsequent IEP meeting. While students should attend their IEP meetings, especially at the secondary level of schooling, many do not participate actively, in part because parents or guardians

are the decision makers. Students must be taught to be active members in their educational planning.

While a diagnosis of a suspected disability usually occurred during a young age, evaluation was based on entitlement to services as mandated by IDEA 2004 (Peterson et al., 2013). However, once a student graduates from high school or reaches the age of 22 years, whichever, comes first, IDEA no longer applies. Individuals with disabilities go from entitlement of services to having to provide proof of eligibility for services (Peterson et al., 2013). It is imperative then that individuals with disabilities are educated about their disability so that they understand what their legal rights and responsibilities are under the new eligibility criteria. Students must also be taught and provided with opportunities to participate in their own postsecondary planning (Cavendish, Connor, & Rediker, 2017).

### **Community Partners**

The transition from the secondary education system to adult life can be very challenging for youth; however, transition to life after high school can be even more challenging for individuals with disabilities (Plotner, Oertle, Reed, Tissot, & Kumpiene, 2017). Involvement in the community through various activities can make the transition to adulthood smoother (Hoover, 2016). To make the transition process easier for an individual with a disability, transition planning is provided “based on the student’s needs preferences, and interest” (Hoover, 2016, p. 21). This means students should be actively involved in their transition planning. Transition planning instruction includes community

experiences and activities (Hoover, 2016). One way individuals with mild disabilities can become involved in the community is to be given opportunities for community service experiences (Hoover, 2016; McLain & Walus, 2015). By providing individuals with disabilities an opportunity to be involved in their communities, a sense of belonging and encouragement as they learn to navigate within the community as a productive citizen can be achieved.

Researchers have argued that structured community service experiences revealed promise, such as social skills building and self-determination (Timmons, Zalewska, Hall, & Fesko, 2017). For community experiences to happen, communities must evolve (McLain, & Walus, 2015). Individuals with disabilities must be given opportunities to be included. More crosssystem collaboration is needed, together with supported community employment for individual with disabilities (McLain, & Walus, 2015; Shogren et al., 2016). Advances in this area can be seen on some level. However, more is needed to support students with mild disabilities integrate into their communities.

### **Current Transition Practices versus Best Practices**

The mandate of IDEA has been a strong catalyst for secondary level special educators to provide a systematic approach to planning and facilitating transition of individuals with disabilities from secondary schooling to life after high school (Mazzotti et al., 2013). The IDEA also obligated the use of scientifically based research practices by educators when implementing instructional practices for transition planning (IDEA, 2004). As a result, several practices have been utilized within the field of special

education. For example, in a study conducted by Strnadova and Cumming (2014), teachers responded to open-ended survey questions regarding their current practices for implementing transitioning services. Teachers highlighted development of functional academic skills, social skills, practical skills, and work-related skills as being significant.

Despite the development of self-determination skills as being an evidence-based predictor of post-school outcomes (Haber et al., 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2014; Rowe et al., 2014; Wehman et al., 2014), and the important role the development of student self-determination plays (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997) particularly in the context of education and employment, helping students to develop self-determination skills continued to be lacking in the practices of many educators (Strnadova & Cummings, 2014). Furthermore, despite the need for active student involvement in the transition process (Kohler & Field, 2003; Test et al., 2009) and interagency collaboration (Mazzotti et al., 2013) being identified as a predictor of successful postsecondary outcomes in education and employment, these practices have been found to be lacking in many transition programs (Strnadova & Cumming, 2014).

The development of self-determination skills and being an active participant in transition planning has been identified by researchers as a necessary criterion for the successful transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary settings (Kohler & Field, 2003; Test et al., 2009). Current researchers, Rodriguez, Cumming, and Strnadova (2017), also found that developing student self-determination was a prominent current

practice of many teachers. Actively involving students in the transition process was also practiced by some teachers; along with involving families in the transition process.

### **Barriers to Effective Transition Planning**

The federal mandate found in the IDEA (2004) related to transition services for individuals with disabilities is acknowledged by education agencies. To this end, some form of transition planning can be found in most schools. Despite this knowledge of the need to provide transition supports for individuals with disabilities, a lack of resources to fund adequate transition support programs continues to be of concern (Ju & Tang, 2016; Tilson, 2016). This includes a lack of professional development opportunities for secondary teachers (Ju & Tang, 2016). Without educators having access to professional development opportunities in transition planning, individuals with disabilities cannot receive adequate support to aid in improving their postsecondary outcomes.

Families are important in the transition of their child with special educational needs. Test et al. (2009) asserts that parental involvement is a best practice when providing transition support. Family involvement includes participating in the student's IEP and transition planning meeting, being involved in the process of decision-making related to postsecondary goals and advocating for their child. However, barriers in these areas hinder the parents' participation. Barriers such as negative experiences with the staff or having feelings of not being part of the team, a lack of information disseminated to the family, and an overall lack of communication with the family continued to exist (Ju & Tang, 2016).



Another barrier to effective transition planning has been linked to ineffective interagency collaboration (Meadows, Davies, & Beamish, 2014). Test et al. (2009) also recognized interagency collaboration as an evidence based predictor of postschool success. Under the IDEA (2004), partnerships among education agencies and multiple agencies serving individuals with disabilities is mandated (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). In addition, a written plan outlining the services and activities to be implemented must be part of the student's IEP (Neubert & Leconte, 2014).

Unfortunately, several obstacles make interagency collaboration challenging. One of the main challenges to interagency collaboration is the differing definitions and rules regarding disability between agencies (Tilson, Jr., 2016). The IDEA of 2004 guarantees that individuals with a disability are entitled to special education services and supports. However, just because an individual was entitled to services under IDEA does not mean that there is an automatic guarantee of adult services (Peterson et al., 2013). These differing definitions regarding disability has made it difficult for individuals with disabilities to seek out and receive postsecondary support.

### **Review of Self-Determination Skills**

There exists considerable research related to transition to postsecondary life for individuals with disabilities and within the findings, self-determination skills remained an evidence-based practice used to predict postschool outcomes (Haber et al., 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2013; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Rowe et al., 2014; Wehman et al., 2014). Self-determination has emerged as a primary indicator of postsecondary success for

individuals with disabilities through transition planning (Kohler & Field, 2003; Test et al., 2009, Van Laarhoven-Myers et al., 2016). While in high school, transition planning, in various forms, has become part of the instructional curriculum for students with disabilities.

The means in which a transition curriculum is delivered varies in schools and districts. However, Van Laarhoven-Meyers et al. (2016) asserted that students should be taught to develop self-determination skills, to self-identify their strengths, weaknesses, preferences for employment and postsecondary education, and where applicable, living options as part of transition planning. Self-determination is valued as an outcome for individuals with exceptional needs; however, high levels of self-determination can also be an important predictor of student outcomes (Shogren et al., 2016). Therefore, for individuals with mild disabilities to have more positive postsecondary outcomes, self-determination skills must be developed.

Throughout the decades, researchers have concurred, teaching and developing self-determination skills in individuals with disabilities is an evidence-based practice that has yielded positive outcomes (Kohler & Field, 2003; Rodriguez, Cummings, & Strnadova, 2017; Test et al., 2009; Thoma, Agran, & Scott, 2016; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Van Laarhoven-Myers, Van Laarhoven, Smith, Johnson, and Olsen (2016) asserted that actively involving students in the process of transition is one avenue for developing self-determination skills. Furthermore, Collier, Griffin, and Wei (2016) provided additional support for actively engaging students in transition planning by

arguing that students are better able to meaningfully participate in transition discussions, thus taking control of their own life outcomes.

Test et al. (2009) conducted a review of literature to identify in-school predictors of improved postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. The results of the review yielded 16 evidence-based predictors of successful postsecondary outcomes. Seven were predictors of improved outcomes in education and employment, of which, self-determination being one of the seven. In addition, Test, Fowler, Kohler, and Kortering (2010) also conducted two reviews of literature to pinpoint evidence-based practices related to postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. The first review was based on experimental studies and the second was based on correlation studies identifying evidence-based practices that correlated to improved educational and employment outcomes. The results of the study revealed that teaching and developing self-determination skills is an evidence-based practice that supports post-secondary education and employment (Test, Fowler, Kohler, & Kortering, 2010).

### **Implications**

The goal of this exploratory case study was to learn how special educators, a transition specialist, and a job developer assist students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills and the strategies implemented when seeking to develop the self-determination skills of students with mild disabilities. A major intent of the IDEA was to make certain that students with exceptional needs have the same favorable

outcomes as their peers without disabilities, which included opportunities for successful postsecondary outcomes (IDEA, 2004).

To derive these results for individuals with disabilities, a study of how special educators prepare students with disabilities to have successful outcomes and opportunities commensurate with their peers without disabilities was warranted. The data collected provided insight for a project to aid special educators as they prepare students to transition into postsecondary education or employment, specifically with self-determination skills. The project for this exploratory case study was to provide professional development to special educators related to transition and building self-determination skills for individuals with mild disabilities. The participants used the results of the self-determination assessment to help them develop instructional activities they could implement in the classroom to increase students' levels of self-determination. Educators rated their current levels of self-determination implementation to determine their strengths in self-determination skills training and areas of growth.

### **Summary**

In this exploratory qualitative case study, the problem of unsuccessful postsecondary outcomes for individuals with mild disabilities at an urban high school was examined. The goal of this exploratory case study was to examine how special educators, a transition specialist, and a job developer assisted students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills, as well as examine the strategies used when seeking to implement self-determination skills training as a means of creating more successful post-

secondary outcomes in the areas of education and employment. The research question for this exploratory study was designed to gather information and perspectives from various special educators, a transition specialist, and a job developer involved in the transition process for students with mild disabilities as to how they prepare these students to exit secondary education as well-prepared, self-determined individuals.

The framework used to guide this project study was Wehmeyer and Schwartz' (1997) theoretical framework for promoting enhanced self-determination as a means of achieving positive postsecondary outcomes. The literature review for this exploratory project study and data collection addressed issues related to family and community involvement and transition planning and assessment. While there is documented research on self-determination as an effective, evidence-based practice for transition support, there is limited research addressing how teachers prepare students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills as an avenue to improved postsecondary education and employment outcomes. Therefore, the lack of research addressing this topic provides a justification to conduct this exploratory case study.

In Section 2 of this exploratory case study, I describe the methodology used for this research. Also included in this section is a description of the qualitative research design employed, along with a description of the data collection strategy for this project study. Data analysis results are also detailed. In this section, the criteria for selecting participants is described. Procedures for gaining access to the participants and a justification for the number of participants is also discussed. The methods of building a

researcher-participant relationship is outlined in this section. Measures for protection of participants' rights, including confidentiality and informed consent will also be described.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

A case study with a qualitative focus was conducted as the design approach.

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study to examine how teachers are developing the self-determination skills of students with exceptional needs because it is an approach used to understand complex social phenomena and contributes to our knowledge of those phenomena (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) further asserted that case study research allows the researcher to keep the case as the focal point, while retaining a real-world perspective of the phenomena under study. Additionally, because qualitative research is an inductive approach, this works as an advantage during coding and the data analysis phase, as the participants own language is most often used as codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Qualitative research was also the most suitable form of research for this problem because I investigated how students with mild disabilities are being prepared for life after high school, using data extracted from participants and student individualized transition plans. Quantitative research and program evaluations would consist of surveys as data collection instruments and these would be very limiting as opposed to the use of open-end questions through semistructured interviews with participants. Furthermore, a qualitative case study allowed me to acquire a fuller understanding of the real-world case at the focus school of the variables under investigation in this study.

A review of the outcomes for students with mild disabilities as they exit high school warrants an in-depth examination of how teachers are preparing students for the transitional period after high school. Prior to the collection of data for this project, I applied to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to begin the data collection phase of this project study. I was granted approval to collect data, approval number 08-10-18-0532250, by Walden University's IRB. The data collection strategy for this research study consisted of 45-60-minute semistructured interviews with 6 special education teachers, a job developer, and a transition specialist to answer the research question and collect data.

The data collection instrument I used consisted of an interview protocol (see Appendix B) that I created, audio tapes of the interviews, and copies of redacted student transition plans that teachers developed. I recorded and transcribed each interview session. Students' Individualized Transition Plans (ITP's) were also de-identified, collected, and analyzed to identify transition goals or gaps in transition goals related to developing self-determination skills. Additionally, the Transition plans provided information that should be addressed in the IEP meeting during the process of transition planning for students related to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living, where applicable. The integration of these data sources assisted with triangulation of the data.



### **Participants**

A convenience sample was utilized for this study. I drafted a letter to the special education staff at the focus school, inviting them to be participants in the study. There was a total of 13 teachers invited, including one teacher who is a transition specialist and a job developer, however, only six participated. Participants for this case study were chosen based on the type of student they serviced. All the teachers serviced students in a specialized academic instructional setting for students with mild disabilities. While the transition specialist serviced students with both exceptionalities: mild and moderate disabilities, she mainly provided services to students with mild disabilities. The job developer also serviced students with mild to moderate disabilities. Additionally, this is a small school setting; therefore, all 13 invited teachers on staff serviced students with mild disabilities and received an invitation to participate in the study. The number of study participants for this qualitative case study was conducive to the depth of inquiry since the case under investigation was bound to the focus high school.

### **Data Collection**

To gain access to the participants for this study, my first task was to obtain permission from the school district to conduct the research. This was done by completing the district's Application to Conduct Research. In taking the approach suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), I had the advantage of coming and going to the campus as needed. I scheduled times to meet with teachers individually before school, after school, or during conference periods when teachers were not working with students. Total

interview time was scheduled for 20 to 30 minutes; however, depending on the participants depth of information, interviews were extended or shortened to meet individual needs.

I explained my research and the requirements for participation in this study to each prospective participant. I also provided each prospective participant an informed consent form and asked each prospective participant to review the consent form and return to me within 24-48 hours via U.S. mail in the self-addressed, stamped envelope, which I provided, if they chose to participate. I also provided each participant, prior to conducting interviews, a synopsis of my research. While it is the policy of the focus district to keep completed consent forms on file with their research department, assurances were made to each participant that the information gathered through our interviews would be kept confidential (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The system I used to record data, as well as new understandings that emerged as I gathered data for my study consisted of personal research logs, audio reflective logs, and interview transcripts. The personal research logs included my field notes as I interviewed the participants, as well as questions I had as the participants answered the research questions. The audio reflective logs included recordings of my reflections as I reviewed data which consisted of individual interview transcriptions for each participant. Personal research logs were kept providing an audit trail to establish dependability and could attest to the trustworthiness of the research data being collected (Rumrill, Cook, & Wiley, 2011). After I met with and interviewed each participant, I kept individual files to

maintain a confidential record of their interview transcripts in a secured, and locked file cabinet in my home office. Notes were also maintained in each file describing themes revealed throughout the data collection phase for each participant and will be kept for a period of five years.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role throughout the research process was only that of a researcher. While I once worked as an Educational Specialist at the focus school during the 2016-2017 school year, I was no longer employed within the focus school's district at the time of this research project. My past professional role and relationship with some of the newer teachers consisted of a mentor/mentee relationship. I acted in a capacity of a professional resource that the new teachers had access to daily. I did not supervise any of the teachers in any capacity, nor did I have any input in their professional evaluations.

My own experiences within the focus school in transition and with the local university, in which I was an active member of a transition grant focusing on transition planning for students with disabilities, did bring some biases to the study. However, as a professional and a student researcher, I believe I did maintain objectivity and kept a fresh, open mind (reporting findings honestly and accurately, including evidence that may be contrary to my orientation towards the topic) throughout the research process.

To protect each of the participants in this study, prior to interviewing, I explained my research study and the requirements for participation in this study. Special care was taken to avoid violating the privacy and confidentiality of participants (Yin, 2014).

Participants were also informed that they had the right to not participate in the study with no consequences (Rumrill et al., 2011) For those who did agree to participate, an informed consent form was provided. Participants were asked to review the form and return to me in 24-48 hours, via the United States Postal Service, in the self-addressed stamped envelope I provided. The consent form guaranteed each participant that they were agreeing to be part of the study, granted assurance that their rights would be protected, that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and for any reason. There was no offer of compensation, free services, or reimbursement of time given for participating in the study, as was outlined in the consent form.

Data collection began with me conducting personal interviews with each participant. Participants were contacted by me, either through email or phone call, to schedule a convenient time and place for us to meet. Prior to recording the actual interview, participants were asked permission to be recorded. I utilized a small, handheld voice recording device to record the interviews. In addition, I made personal notes as each interviewee provided responses to the questions that I believed needed follow-up or more probing questions. All interview data was personally transcribed by me. All research interview transcripts were de-identified as soon as reasonably possible to minimize any risk of personal information being disclosed. This included assigning alpha-numeric pseudonyms to each participant.

In addition to interview data, Individualized Transition Plans (ITP's) were collected. Each teacher participant was asked to submit at least three, randomly chosen, ITP's. All ITP's were redacted and de-identified prior to review and inclusion in the findings of the study. The review of the ITP's was conducted by me. Data from the ITP's I was looking for that was pertinent for this study included: identification of services and supports provided to aid student's development of self-determination skills as aligned with their postsecondary goals in education and employment as described in their IEP's. After the data collection phase was concluded, data were catalogued according to themes revealed through analysis of the data. After a 5-year period has expired, all data will be disposed of by shredding all documents, including field notes and interview data.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the interview and transition plan data by conducting a thematic analysis with open coding. All data were personally hand organized into codes and potential themes by me. After all data had been coded and analyzed, an analysis of emerging themes followed to identify the presence of relationships or connections among the open codes. After the initial analysis, I discovered that there were not enough data to answer the research questions. I was granted approval from IRB: 08-10-18-0532250, to conduct follow-up interviews to ask additional questions (Appendix C). The additional questions asked and responded to provided enough additional data to answer the research questions and inform the development of a meaningful project to address the problem of the study.

### **Evidence of Quality and Procedures**

To provide evidence of quality, credibility, and accuracy of my research findings, several methods were employed. A six-step process was utilized: audit trails, field notes, triangulation, transcript review, member checks, and a peer reviewer. By maintaining an audit trail, my research process would be clear to other researchers who may wish to review it and attest to its trustworthiness or replicate this study (Rumrill et al., 2011). I also kept detailed field notes, as well as an audio recording of all interviews. Field notes allowed me to obtain important information from the perspectives of the participants (Rumrill et al., 2011). A peer reviewer was instrumental in providing an objective perspective as to my interpretations of the research data (Rumrill et al., 2011).

Triangulation was conducted during data analysis to increase credibility and validity of the data. Yin (2014) defined triangulation as “the convergence of data collected from different sources, to determine consistency of findings” (p. 241). During the data collection phase of my research, data was collected from several individuals: teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer through interviews. Individual Transition Plan documents were also examined. These sources allowed me to cross-reference interpretation of the data during analysis (Rumrill et al., 2011). Triangulation served as a means of corroborating the data collected from the interviews and the ITPs to determine if they align; does the information presented by the teachers, based on the interview questions, reflect what is being done based on the ITPs (Creswell, 2012).

Prior to conducting follow-up interviews, I conducted member checks, where I shared the themes gathered from the initial interviews with the participants to gather their comments. Creswell (2012) describes member checks as the process of taking the research themes or findings back to one or more of the participants, giving them an opportunity to comment on such. In addition, Yin (2014) suggested having key informants review the case study draft as another measure to establish construct validity. Transcript reviews were used as an additional layer of credibility throughout the study. As a student researcher, I wanted to confirm that my descriptions and interpretations were fair and accurate (Creswell, 2014; Rumrill et al., 2011). Each of the measures utilized added to the evidence of a quality research project.

By performing a thorough review of the literature as I sought to answer my research question, the discovery of discrepant data is a possibility when conducting qualitative research. Discrepant case data has been defined by Creswell (2014) as information that is contrary to themes uncovered during the analysis. Furthermore, Rumrill et al. (2011) adds that discrepant data are data that do not support the researcher's initial conclusions. Discrepant data were examined, together with the supporting data to determine if the findings were legitimate and could be included as is or if a modification were warranted (Rumrill et al., 2011). A diligent effort was made to address any discrepant data uncovered within my project study.

As a researcher, my choice of the topic of postsecondary outcomes for students with mild disabilities was one that I felt very strongly about. Consequently, it is natural

that I came into this project study with some bias. However, the use of an audit trail, triangulation, peer reviewers, transcripts reviews, and member checks were all methods that I used to minimize any biases. Additionally, I made every effort to maintain objectivity and proper ethical practices as I conducted this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Detailed fieldnotes, with my own reflections, and review of these notes by a trusted colleague, a school psychologist, was an increased measure of addressing any biases brought to my study. The results of this study has the potential to aid educators as they implement transition activities as they prepare students with disabilities for life after high school.

### **Limitations**

At the initial meeting with the department at the focus school, I distributed a total of 13 participant letters and consent forms. I received a total of five consent forms back. After two weeks, I resent the participant letters and consent forms. For the second mailing I only received one form back. There were only six participants in total for this project study. This presented a limitation for this study, as the data cannot be generalized to an entire population of special educators. Another limitation of this study is that the focus is solely on students with special educational needs, with mild disabilities. This would also limit the generalizability of this study for students with moderate to severe disabilities and students without disabilities.

Another limitation of this study is that the data resources were limited to semi-structured interviews and student's Individualized Transition Plans. While the transition



plans provided a wealth of information, the final results of the evaluation would be deemed inconclusive due to the absence of another key piece of necessary data – a review of the annual IEP goals – to determine to what extent, if any, self-determination skills are being developed in students with disabilities. A review of the annual IEP goals, together with the ITP would provide information to demonstrate if and how these goals connect and support students to develop self-determination skills as they are headed towards their post-secondary goals.

An additional limitation to this study is presented when looking at participant's roles. The participants in this study included teachers, a job developer, and a transition specialist. To protect each participant, I could not identify the different positions as I interviewed each. Therefore, it is not possible to determine who is doing what in their respective roles as it relates to helping students with disabilities develop self-determination skills. Future researchers could perhaps keep each role separate such as: only teachers and only transition specialist as a more concrete way of knowing how each are helping students to develop self-determination in their educational roles.

### **Data Analysis Results**

To begin the data collection phase, I was granted permission to meet with the staff at the focus school during a department meeting to briefly discuss my research and distribute participant letters. I was able to deliver the participant letters, consent forms, and answer any questions that were posed by staff members. Each letter had a self-addressed stamped envelope so that the perspective participant could mail the consent

forms back to me. After I received the consent forms, I contacted the participant to schedule an interview. Each participant granted me permission to record the interview. Field notes were also taken during the interview process. Interviews were held at a time and place of the participants' choosing.

Throughout the data collection phase, several recurring phrases and concepts were mentioned by the different participants. As I began to transcribe the data, I noticed many of the same themes were prevalent with each participant. After coding the data, I discovered several concepts that could fall under the umbrella of one larger theme. Table 1.0 indicates a total of seven themes and two subthemes that were revealed during the coding. Table 2.0 indicates two additional themes that were discovered after a review of the student's ITPs.

Table 1.0

*Project Study Themes and Sub-Themes*

Themes	Sub-Themes
Teach Students Independence	Teach Accountability
Allow Students to Fail Now to Pave the Way to Future Success	
Provide Peer and Alumni Mentors	Provide Community Role Models
Begin Transition Planning and Support early	
Provide Resources and Support for all Stakeholders to aid student's development of self-determination	
Involve/ Engage students in the IEP and ITP Process	
The Current Focus for Students with Disabilities Must Reflect Goals and Objectives focused on life after high school	

Table 2.0

*Themes Based on Individual Transition Plans*

Theme
Lack of quality goals and objectives
Transition activities are not measurable

Each of these themes represented how each of these participants approached transition planning. Each of these themes and subthemes are detailed and a few, critical direct quotes were used to convey the messages of each participant. Although, each participant played a different role when it came to assisting students to develop self-determination skills, to protect the identity of the participants, each will be identified as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. This does present a limitation in obtaining a fuller understanding of the roles as mentioned earlier.

### **Theme 1: Teach Students Independence**

Each of the participants in this study expressed the need to help students with special educational needs become more independent. Most of the participants felt the students needed to develop more in this area to advance in other areas. For example, when commenting on how the development of self-determination skills will support students as they embark on postsecondary education or employment, participants felt teaching independence now would aid the students in the future. For example, P1 stated, “if we teach these kids to be independent early on, then we may begin to see some changes in the overall outcomes.” That there is a need for educators to help students become more independent was expressed by other participants as well.

P5 stated the concern using more colloquial expressions:

Teachers have to let the students learn to do more for themselves. It seems like we (*educators*) continue to spoon feed the students and they now have this learned helplessness. In my opinion, sometimes we carry on these practices’ way too long

and the students never grow. I get it, we work with student who have challenges, educational or otherwise. I get it. But how are they ever going to improve if we don't let them learn independence? We as teachers need to understand that these kids are not going to be with us always and they will need to get by on their own once they leave us. If we teach independence as a way of developing self-determination skills, students will not need us to continue to carry them through.

**Subtheme: Teach Accountability**

When discussing how educators could promote self-determination in students, along with talking about the need for students to gain more independence, the concept of accountability was strongly emphasized. These educators were of the impression that there is not enough student accountability.

P2 explained:

We just tend to let them get away with doing nothing and everybody seems to think it's ok. These kids are so used to us doing everything. They even tell us they don't have to do nothing and still pass. I'm sorry, but that's not going to work when they get out there in the real world. I tell my students that everything is a competition and they will be competing with people like me who have bachelor's degrees and master's degrees. It's sad but we are letting it happen.

P4 expressed it in this way,

Teachers can help students become more independent. They can start early having students take on more responsibility in the classroom, maybe not responsibility, but accountability. They need to be accountable for their learning.

### **Theme 2: Allow Failure Now to Pave the Way for Future Student Success**

As I discussed with the participants how as educators, they are promoting the development of self-determination skills, another theme that was saliently emphasized by the participants was the notion that students should be allowed to fail. While this notion may seem to be a bit unorthodox, the participants explained their reasoning.

P1 stated,

Teachers need to allow students to fail in order to lead to success. Students need to learn that failure is not necessarily a negative thing. Everybody, mainly administrators think that if a student fail, it's something a teacher did wrong. Failing at something isn't the worst thing these kids are going to face when they leave here. If they learn about failure now, they will be better able to handle and come back from failure in the future.

P2 explained,

Our kids give up too quickly. If they (*students*) fail at something they will not try again. At the first sign of failure or that they don't know something, they just give up. If they have self-determination, they are going to keep trying even when they don't do good. I teach (core subject) and some of my students fail the first time they have my class and I don't change their grades or my grading scale. When

they come back to me the second time, they are ready, and they do so much better.

P3 explained,

So many times, kids just give up. They fail at one thing and they feel like it's all over. They don't even want to try. It is so frustrating for me in my job because I feel like I have to hunt the kids down to get them to do the simplest thing.

Educators have to stop just passing kids. Let students fail and learn to come back from failure, learn that failure is a sign that you've tried. I tell my students this all the time and those who listen, benefit the second time.

P4 also noted,

We (*teachers*) need to start teaching the kids it is o.k. to fail and it doesn't mean you are a failure. Like that saying failure is proof that you are trying. All we want them to do is try and if they do fail, so be it. You can always come back from a failure, but what can you improve on when you don't even try?

P5 added a further detail,

Teachers have to allow students to fail sometimes in order to know failure now and then they won't be so quick to give up when and if they do go to college or get a job. If we start teaching them now that failure is something that they did at one thing and not that they themselves are failures, I'm sure this is one way we can begin building self-determination in the students. I have been guilty of making failure seem like it's all bad; however, now I have really begun to impress

on my students that even if they fail at something, it is not the end of the world and the worst thing that can happen is they retake it, if it's one of their classes.

### **Theme 3: Provide Peer and Alumni Mentors**

During the data collection, each of the participants expressed the need for peer mentors. *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, fourth edition defines mentors as “an experienced person in an organization or institution who trains and advises...”.

Participants were asked to describe some effective ways school can create learning opportunities, as well as a culture for the development of students with disabilities.

P2 explained,

I think another thing schools can do is have alumni come back up to the school and talk to the current students and tell them how it really is, whether it's college or working. They can maybe reach the students when we can't. They will listen to their peer before us anyway. This would be a perfect time to put that peer influence to good use. I always have students that come back to my class after they graduate or sometimes, I even reach out to the ones that really struggled and ask them to come talk to my classes. They like being the one to speak to students and some of the students really listened.

P3 elaborated,

I allow students the opportunity to integrate more with their peers and recent graduates, and get firsthand experiences from them, especially my freshman. It is such a positive experience when students who have already graduated from the



high school and are either in college or working and they can come back and talk about their experiences. Peer mentors are really effective, sometimes even more than we are.

P4 also added,

Having peer alumni talk with my students has been a good thing, especially since their experiences will be different from those of an adult. Peers have more influence on the kids than we do. Why not have them come back and talk to the kids about their experiences? I really believe that it is very effective for the students.

P5 commented,

One thing I like to do is to have former school alumni to come back to the school to talk to the kids. Peer alumni experiences will be so much different than what we can say to them or even teach them. I think the peers make it more real to the kids, especially since they'll know some of them because they were probably all at the school together at one time or they may even live in the same neighborhoods. Definity will be more effective than you or me in some instances.

While all the participants agreed that having peer mentors or peer alumni come back to talk to the students about their firsthand experiences in either college or employment was one method used to support self-determination development, participants also mentioned another avenue to which they are helping to create learning

opportunities and a culture of developing self-determination along the same lines as a mentor, namely, use of community role models.

**Subtheme: Provide Community Role Models**

The concept of community was an area the participants discussed during the interviews as relating to aspects of the student's life that is just as important as the services rendered inside the school. Community stretches beyond those within the immediate area and extended to individuals who may have at one time been a part of the immediate community. The sense of providing tangible examples for students was conveyed. P1 and P6 explained the benefits of having community role models, either famous individuals or individuals with disabilities.

P1 explained,

Students need to have examples of famous people with and without disabilities to come speak with them, but especially those with disabilities so that they can find commonalities between the person and themselves. These examples can give the students the sense that hey, if they can do it, so can I.

P6 explained,

Another thing we can do is have famous people come to the school to speak with the students, to give them positive role models in the field of study or profession they want to pursue. These kids, first of all (pause) the kids – well maybe some of the kids – don't even recognize they have a disability or refuse to admit or acknowledge – well some of them don't even know they have a disability. But if

they begin to see people with disabilities, the same disability that they may have, and these people are doing wonderful things, they may begin to see themselves as capable of doing wonderful things.

#### **Theme 4: Begin Transition Planning and Support Early**

While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates transition planning and services to begin no later than age 16 years (Trainor et al., 2016), participants in this study believed this timeframe was too late to begin. P1 and P6 explained how they believed transition planning should begin at a very young age.

P1 explained,

Transition planning should not just be introduced to students before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday just because that is what the law states. Transition needs to begin at a young age, even as young as late elementary school – grades 4 and 5. If you wait until the student is 16 years old – many students are just about to graduate, and you can't expect them to figure out their entire futures in 10 months. Some students may even be about to graduate – I was. I was 17 years old when I graduated from high school and I'm sure you were around that same age. If we start young, we give the students time and a better chance of figuring out exactly what it is they want to do – school or work.

P6 added,

I think we start too late with transition planning. We need to start early on – possibly late elementary. If we start early, we are giving the students an

opportunity to look into several different components of what they will face when they leave high school. The students are also learning more about themselves and all of this can help them eventually get to where we want them to be – able to self-advocate and have those self-determination skills, which are sorely needed for this population of students.

**Theme 5: Provide Resources and Support for all Stakeholders to Aid Student’s Development of Self-Determination**

Each of the participants expressed concern regarding the lack of resources and support available for students, teachers, and parents. This data, while important to the participants, present discrepant information that does not directly address the research question but will be further addressed in the outcomes section of this paper. While it was stated that the district and school does have some resources to support transition, these are outdated and very limited. Participants explained how they must take it upon themselves to locate resources that are appropriate and readily accessible for the students. In addition, participants extended the need for more resources outside the brick and mortar surroundings; but also included the need for more community resources.

P1 explained,

When it comes to support and resources, students need to have more choices.

Students need a more diverse course selection like Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) or other programs. These programs don’t always need to occur at the school. I know of other districts that have ROP counselors and students can

take classes concurrently after the age of 16 years. For the students that are not really interested in going to college, something like an ROP program would be great for them, even something that can provide a training. We used to have those kind of classes here and they did away with them and opted for the career pathways. Even if these students can learn a skill, like the automotive classes we used to have, when they graduate, they can possibly get a job.

P2 stated,

I guess schools can provide more resources for the students – for that matter, teachers too. We really don't have a whole lot when it comes to resources for special education transition. We use the same online assessments for all the students and some of them take it more than once, so they just keep checking off the same boxes; however, when I interview them for what they want to do after high school, they still tell me they don't know. These students also need some community resources. The community really needs to get involved and partner more with the schools, especially since these kids will be working or going to school in the community. It's really going to take all of us to make a difference.

P3 stated,

These students really need a lot of support, a lot more than what we have to offer. We need to support the whole child. A lot of times in the school they only look at the academics, but these kids have so much going on in their day to day lives, it's not just school for them. They may be doing bad in school and it's all these other

things that are causing them to do bad in school. If we take a holistic approach and try to meet all of the student's needs, we could see changes for the better in many of our students. We also need to support the parents. I can't begin to tell you how many times parents have thanked me for – what I think is really tiny – the support I have given them or thanked me for simply helping their child begin to think about life after high school or complete an application. Parents need so much, and we just don't have the resources that they need so that they in turn can help their students. It's really sad.

P4 explained,

School can help by providing more resources for what the students will need after they graduate high school. They need programs, some kind of model that will help them no matter what they decide to do. We can't just keep on giving them the same ole' assessments and expect that this will be enough. I really believe better; more effective and practical resources will result in better outcomes in the long run.

P6 explained,

I think the entire culture of the school needs to change when we look at what the overall outcomes have been for our kids. We need to start thinking more about the kinds - the types of resources the kids need. They need community resources, peer resources, you know, like their peers coming back and help them out, like a mentor. I think all schools need programs like the Transition Partnership Program

(TPP) and the Workability program, but they are phasing these out for many schools. For the more severe students, we have vocational rehabilitation (VR); however, not all kids will get this opportunity. We should also be setting the students up to be prepared for the work force by means of having them to job shadow. It's done all the time in corporate America.

While the participants did express their individual frustrations with the lack of available, in-house resources, each participant also expressed their individual ability to acquire additional resources for their classrooms, whether in the form of human resources or material purchases they may personally make or receive from others.

#### **Theme 6: Involve/ Engage Students in IEP and ITP Process**

At the onset of the interviews, participants were asked to express their thoughts on how educators can assist students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills as an avenue towards more successful postsecondary outcomes. One resounding comment that echoed from each participant was the need for students to learn to be more independent. Participants expressed that the lack of student independence has also mirrored a lack of involvement in their education and transition.

P1 explained,

If we want to see the students' progress and be ready to enter either post-secondary education or employment, we, teachers (pause) really schools, need to allow more decision-making on the part of students – I mean within reason. It seems like we make all the decisions for the students – we choose their classes,

their pathways or what SLC (small learning community) they are going to be in. Yeah (focus school) seems to be heading up that path, I guess – all this money they're putting into this school. But our students are still going to be limited in what SLC they can choose, so where's the real decision-making. Get the students involved in the school, explore, let them explore, it just might lead to something different. We need to provide more choices, again with some adult guidance, but letting the students be involved. If we keep doing things the same way, we are going to continue to get the same outcomes. There's a lot more that I would like to say, but I think I'll stop here.

P3 stated,

We really need to allow the students to be more involved in the IEP process, especially in the creation of their ITP's (Individualized Transition Plan) when they become seniors. I believe if they are involved, if they are giving input on their plan, they will take more ownership of it and their decision and be better able to make decisions that will affect them, you know, decisions they can live and work with and not have to have others make the decisions for them. But you know if we don't get them involved early, it's basically, well hopefully not, but it might be too late.

Students' involvement in the IEP process, even conducting the IEP meeting has been mentioned by researchers as a promising practice for preparing students with special educational needs for postsecondary success (Test et al., 2009). These participants also



added that this is not a practice that they most commonly see; although felt it should be. P6 added, “We really need to do more to set these kids up for their futures, get them involved as best as we can. I don’t see how we can continue not to”.

### **Theme 7: The Current Focus for Students with Disabilities Must Reflect Goals and Objectives Focused on Life After High School**

The participants explained that what the school is currently focusing on, especially with students within the special education setting needs to be changed. Some of the participants expressed that the current focus is more of a hinderance to students with special educational needs than it is helpful.

P4 explained,

Well it seems like we just continue to focus only on the academics for these kids and it really isn’t helping them. We need to put more focus on the soft skills, like self-determination, self-awareness, and self-efficacy. I think all of these are right up there with self-advocacy. The students are going into the world unprepared. Like simple things, like answering a telephone, or how do you greet a person you meet the first time. Most of our students don’t have those soft skills (how to even place a phone call on hold and we see this when they answer the classroom phones). So, we really need to spend time focusing on that aspect of their education, especially since we are saying that we are preparing them for post-secondary life. We need to start focusing on these sort of soft skills.

P6 stated,

You know as a district, even as a school and I know we have to do what the district mandates, but really, we need to look at what we're focusing on, especially for our kids. I really do think we need to focus on helping students develop some form of self-determination, self-efficacy because I don't see it in the students. The focus seems to be too much on meeting A – G requirements and we don't even help these students be prepared to survive when they leave high school. Meeting A – G is good for some students, you know, those who are looking to go to college and can be successful, those with really good academic skills now, but what about the ones that have no desire to attend college when they leave here? What are they going to do? We need to help students develop skills they will need when they leave school, skills like self-determination so that they will not give up at the first sign of failure at something, whether they are working or are in college. So, I just think A – G is emphasized way too much. Sure, we want the kids to graduate and we do want college for them, but really, what are they going to do after high school? They need jobs - they need to be college ready for the few that will go on to attend college...schools should be following up with the students after they graduate. What are they doing, what do they still need help with?

When commenting on the change of focus in the school system, P6 continued,

We need to change the focus for our kids with disabilities. We need to stop focusing on “dis” ability and begin to focus more on “a”bility. These kids are able

and capable of doing more than what they are given credit for. When this view, the current view of special education changes from being a negative to being a support, students will more freely advocate for available services and supports when they are in college; and this way they will begin to complete course, stay in college instead of giving up so quickly.

Data analysis results from the interview transcripts revealed the following themes:

(a) teach students to be more independent, (b) allow students to fail now to pave the way for future success, (c) provide peer and alumni mentors, (d) the timeliness of transition planning and support, (e) lack of resources for all stakeholders, (f) student involvement/engagement in the IEP and ITP process, (g) the current focus for students with disabilities needs to be changed to reflect current needs. Two subthemes also emerged from the data analysis from the participants' interview transcripts: accountability on the part of students with disabilities and the need for more community role models. ITPs were also reviewed as a secondary source of data. Below is an analysis of that data.

### **Themes Based on Individual Transition Plans**

#### **Theme 1: Lack of Quality Goals and Objectives**

In addition to analyzing interview transcripts, participants provided samples of student Individualized Transition Plans (ITP) as part of the data collected. An analysis of the ITP's revealed two themes: (a) lack of quality goals and objectives and (b) transition activities do not support postsecondary goals. A review of each ITP indicated that transition is being addressed in the areas of employment, education or training, and

independent living. In addition, postsecondary goals are also being written to address these post-school needs. However, in some cases, the goals are not specific, measurable, or time bound. For example, an employment goal stated, “student will identify attitudes and behaviors necessary for job success.” An independent living goal read, “student will demonstrate appropriate skills to utilize for a safe home and community.” An education/training goal read, “upon high school graduation, student will attend a community college and transfer to a 4-year college or university and major in art or music.”

While each of the goals were stated in terms of the student’s postschool needs and reflected what was stated in the summary of the student’s transition needs and based on age-appropriate assessments, as indicated on the ITP itself, the goals were not specific as to the behaviors the student needed or the specific steps to master to attain the goal. Furthermore, there were no success criteria as a means of measuring attainment of the goals, nor were there any time guidelines for meeting the goals.

## **Theme 2: Transition Activities Do Not Support Post-Secondary Goal**

When writing students’ Individualized Education Plan goals, educators write goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. These same goal-writing processes should apply to students’ Individualized Transition Plan goals. A review of the ITP’s revealed that while the goals may be relevant based on the student’s interest, the activities to help support the student in attaining the postsecondary goal are not measurable or time bound. For example, one of the ITP’s reviewed had a post-

secondary goal for independent living as follows: “demonstrate appropriate skills to utilize for a safe home and community”. The transition activities designed to enable student to meet this goal were as follows: a) research rents and cost-of-living expenses in area, b) apply for a driver’s license, c) learn for about his disability, d) proper nutrition and money manage, e) safety and household chores. While each activity as a singular step towards independence in their postsecondary endeavors is applicable, a connection does not exist for supporting the student to meet the postsecondary goal as outlined in the ITP. There is a need for more specificity, measurability, and timeliness to be incorporated with each of these activities.

On each of the ITP’s, as part of the post school transition needs summary is a section for the educator to write in the annual goals (based on the student’s IEP) to support a student’s postsecondary goal. On each of the ITP’s reviewed the following summary of IEP goals were stated: self-determination, writing expository, reading fluency, and algebraic equations. Student IEP’s were not reviewed as part of this case study, therefore, a review of the annual goals could not take place to determine if the ITP goals were based on the IEP goals. Perhaps future research in this area can include a review of a student’s annual IEP goals to determine if a seamless connection is occurring between post-secondary transition goals and annual IEP goals. In the next section, I will discuss the procedures employed to ensure the quality of the data collected.

### **Evidence of Quality**

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data collection, several procedures were implemented. I received conditional approval from Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB) of my initial proposal to conduct this study, pending approval from the focus district. I drafted and sent an email to the principal of the focus school to obtain permission to conduct interviews with staff members of the special education department. Once I received an informal approval from the principal at the focus school to conduct the study, I provided the district's Research Request Form to the principal for completion and approval. Once I received district approval, I re-submitted the IRB application and received a final approval.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with the participants who provided consent to participate in the research study. Participants granted me permission to record our interviews using a small, hand-held recording device. Although the interviews were being recorded, I also wrote observers notes as participants were speaking, mainly to follow-up with additional questions I had or points that I felt should be emphasized or were similar to other interviewees' remarks. I personally transcribed each audio recording of the interviews. During the transcription, as questions arose regarding something that was said during the interview, I made note of these questions and followed up with the transcript reviewer to receive clarification.

Upon completion of the transcription, I used participant transcript review to allow each participant to read the transcript to check for accuracy of the interview as

transcribed. I emailed each participant a copy of their interview to ensure their words were captured accurately. Once each participant confirmed the accuracy of their interview, I began the analysis and coding process. A typological analysis – a classification system – was used to analyze the data to determine themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Open coding was used to determine themes and categories. I used a color-coded system to highlight comments that were made by the participants that were similar. After analyzing and coding the data, I created a narrative to convey the findings of the study. Triangulation also occurred as I reviewed student Individual Transition Plans (ITP's) to further ensure the accuracy of the data. To protect the identity of each of the participants, I used a letter and number combination for identification purposes. My narrative was reviewed by education colleagues in the field with advanced degrees as another method to ensure accuracy. Finally, my study was reviewed by my Walden University Doctoral committee.

Data sources included audio recording of the interviews, transcripts, Individual Transition Plans, and researcher's field notes. A small handheld personal recording device was used to record all interviews. All information was stored on my personal computer, which is password protected. All field notes, transcripts, and the recorder with the interviews were filed and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

### **Outcomes**

After transcribing the data from the initial interviews, it was determined that the participants had very little to say regarding how they are helping students to develop self-

determination skills; but, more to say on what could or should be done. Based on these findings, follow-up interviews were warranted. I contacted each of the participants by phone and email to arrange a convenient date and time to ask additional follow-up questions. Four of the participants were readily available and two had scheduling conflicts. However, in the end, only three of the initial participants provided follow-up data. While all the initial participants did not participate in the follow-up interviews, enough information was gathered from those who did participate to answer the research questions and develop a project based on the revelations from these participants.

A complete analysis of the data from the initial interviews uncovered the following themes: teach students independence, allow students to fail now to pave the way to future success, provide peer and alumni mentors, begin transition planning and support early, provide resources and support for all stakeholders to support student's development of self-determination, involve/ engage students in the IEP and ITP process, and the current focus for students with disabilities must reflect goals and objectives focused on life after high school. Each of the themes that emerged from this study's analyses as they relate to the study's research questions will be discussed.

RQ: How do high school special education teachers, a job developer, and transition specialist assist students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills as an avenue towards more successful postsecondary adult outcomes?



(Sub-question): How does students' Individualized Transition Plans (ITP's) reflect self-determination skills support for students with mild disabilities?

In the sections to follow, I present a narrative summary of findings and interpretation of the data in relation to the problem, research questions, and larger body of literature related to the topic of this study.

### **Theme 1 – Teach Students Independence**

The first theme in this study was to teach students more independence. Each of the participants eluded to a need for more independence on the part of the students. Participants believed students were not held accountable and that more accountability needed to take place for students with disabilities to give them a sense that they can succeed. Participants also expressed benefits that came along with more independence, such as empowerment. Some of the participants believed educators have to let go. One participant expressed that teachers needed to let students do more for themselves. It was also mentioned that too much hand holding takes places and that some teachers keep the training wheels on too long when it comes to giving student's independence.

Although the participants believed independence was one method of helping students develop self-determination skills, more was discussed in the initial interview of what teachers can and/or should be doing to develop independence. In the follow-up interview, when asked directly how they help their students to develop self-determination skills through teaching independence, participants responded with several different approaches used. For example, P2 stated that familiarizing students with their IEP's is the

first step used when teaching independence. By familiarizing themselves with their IEP's students begin to advocate for themselves and communicate their needs when interacting with peers and adults on staff.

P4 explained that providing students with opportunities to problem solve and help guide their decision-making, is a step utilized in her classroom. Role playing and creating opportunities where the students can use the learned skills, "whether it is on campus or in the community aids in teaching self-determination and independence. P5 had similar thoughts related to self-determination development and independence: "I like taking the kiddos into the community. They make purchases on their own and I stand and watch. They are quickly learning to be independent by doing, not just me telling them they need to be more independent".

## **Theme 2 – Allow Student to Fail Now to Pave the Way to Future Success**

The second theme within this study was that students should be allowed to fail now to pave the way to future success. When the word fail or failure is heard, there is usually a negative connotation associated with the word. However, these participants felt that students with disabilities should be taught that it is ok to fail and when they do fail, it is a sign that they have tried. Some of the participants believed that the students give up too quickly and instead of educators helping them to work through the challenges, they are given a pass simply because of their disability. Participants expressed the need to help students learn to come back from failure and if they know how to come back from a

failure, it will lead the way for more successful outcomes, as well as students with disabilities not giving up at the first sign of failure.

During the initial interview, participants agreed that allowing students to fail now paves the way for future success; however, connecting this belief to how students are helped to develop self-determination skills was not addressed. Therefore, during the follow-up interviews, I readdressed this theme. P2 explained that in her classes, students are expected to perform to the best of their ability. She further explained, that in many classrooms, this expectation has not always been fully adhered to. As a result, many students do not always put forth their best effort in class. This has, in some cases, resulted in poor performance on the part of the student. Therefore, when the times comes to issue grades, students are given the grade they have earned. This has been a shocker for many students. P2 adds: “If they fail the class, they received the fail. They can retake the class and they do; however, next time, more effort is put into learning and outcomes are better because they have learned from their previous failure”. P5 expressed that often failure is made out to be the worst thing that can happen to a student; however, she teaches her students that failure is all about growth and that without failure you cannot truly grow. P5 admits that this is a difficult lesson for students to accept; however, she has seen some positive results from many of her previously graduated students.

### **Theme 3 – Provide Peer and Alumni Mentors**

The third theme was providing peer and alumni mentors for students with disabilities. Providing peer mentors is not a new concept in the general and special

education arena (Getzel, 2014). Struggling students have often been provided with a peer mentor, both at the secondary level and in postsecondary education (Getzel, 2014).

Participants expressed that there exists a greater need for students with disabilities to integrate more with their general education peers, as well as having student alumni come back to the high school to provide mentorship to those students seeking postsecondary education or employment. Participants felt that having peers speak to the students, there is a level of connectivity that does not always exist between student and teacher.

Furthermore, participants expressed that general education exposure, with peers or the curriculum should be an expectation for all students with special educational needs. Support services in inclusive practices and general education participation with peers without disabilities has been supported as a best practice for students with disabilities within the research literature (Papay & Bambara, 2014; Test et al., 2009). Participants also expressed a need to provide students with examples of famous individuals with disabilities or even successful alumni who would be willing to come to the school site and speak to students regarding the challenges they faced and how they overcame those challenges despite their disability.

In discussing the need for peer and alumni mentors, findings show that while all participants felt this was something schools could do to help students as they prepare for post-secondary life, not all participants took advantage of this resource. P3, P4, and P5 all stated that they have their students integrate more with their general education peers and/or have recent alumni come speak to students. However, because this was not widely

practiced by the participants, each had more to say about what could be done, instead of what they are doing. Furthermore, participants saw providing peer and alumni mentors as more of a responsibility of the school as opposed to their individual responsibility for their students.

#### **Theme 4 – Begin Transition Planning and Support Early**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) mandates transition planning and services for students with disabilities to begin no later than age 16 years (IDEA, 2004; Trainor et al., 2016). While the federal mandate is for transition services to begin no later than the age of 16 years, participants in this study believed transition planning and services began too late. Late elementary, at a younger age, was suggested by the participants. Participants expressed the need to begin providing transition services at a younger age for students with disabilities. This was seen as one avenue of exposing students to situations where they are constantly thinking about their postsecondary options and thereby, placing students in a better position to make meaningful decisions for themselves related to postsecondary education and employment when that time comes.

#### **Theme 5 – Provide Resources and Support for all Stakeholders to aid student’s development of self-determination**

During initial participant interviews, it was mentioned that there is a lack of resources and support available for students, teachers, and parents to aid in assisting students with disabilities to develop self-determination skills as they prepare for life after

high school. While this revelation was beneficial information, it did not directly address the research question; and provided discrepant case data, however, it does deserve additional consideration. Future research could perhaps further investigate the need and role of resources and support for teachers, students, and parents as they work together to prepare students with disabilities for successful postsecondary outcomes.

The fifth theme in this study related to the lack of resources and support for all stakeholders. When referring to stakeholders, each participant mentioned a specific group that needed either support or resources: students, teachers, and parents. Participants felt strongly that students needed more access to community resources within their own neighborhoods. Not only academic resources such as a more diverse course selection, but also resources within the scope of transition services. Participants suggested more resources in the form of peer alumni involvement, programs such as Workability, vocational rehabilitation, and job shadow programs as a means of supporting the whole child. Programs such as these have also been identified in the research literature as those necessary for postsecondary goal attainment (Test et al., 2009; Trainor et al., 2016). In fact, Vocational Rehabilitation is required by federal law to provide pre-employment training for youth with disabilities as early as age 14 years (Collier et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Participants saw the lack of resources as a major obstacle to success in transition planning.

Lack of teacher resources were also mentioned by the participants. Participants reported using the same transition assessments year after year and that the students have

become so accustomed to the questionnaires and assessments that no genuine effort is put into completing the assessments. Support for parents was another concern. Participants described not having the resources to provide to parents what they may need to support their child in transitioning to postsecondary education or employment. Each participant agreed to some extent that the parents needed more access to school and community resources to support both the student and the teacher during the process of transition.

### **Theme 6 – Involve/ Engage Students in the IEP and ITP Process**

Theme 6 was the need for more student engagement in the IEP and ITP process. Participants saw this as an area that could be greatly improved upon. Participants saw providing students with more opportunities for participation in their transition planning as a key avenue in preparing students for postsecondary education and employment. Giving students more decision-making power was another key component suggested for successful student transition. Research supports involvement of students and their parents in transition planning as a means of combating the negative postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities (Harrison, State, Wills, Custer, & Miller, 2017). Active engagement in transition planning has also been reported as an evidence-based method of helping students with disabilities develop self-determination (Collier et al., 2017). Participants agreed, student involvement and engagement, especially in the ITP needs to be increased if postsecondary outcomes are to change.

### **Theme 7 – Current Focus for Students with Disabilities Must Reflect Goals and Objectives Focused on Life After High School**

Theme 7 suggested a need to change the focus for students with disabilities to reflect the needs of the student as they are being prepared for life after high school. Participants expressed a greater focus should be placed on providing students with the tools they will need as they enter postsecondary education or employment. Currently, a huge focus is on all students meeting the A – G requirements to graduate from high school and be eligible to enter a university. Participants felt that while postsecondary education is important, there is too much focus placed on meeting A – G requirements. Participants expressed concerned that the needs of all students are not being met when the only focus is on meeting university entrance requirements.

Participants stated the focus needs to be changed so that the needs of all students are met. More focus should be placed on helping students learn “soft skills” necessary for gainful employment, according to one participant. This point coincided with another participant who believed more focus needed to be on students with disabilities developing skills they will need after high school. Another participant stated more focus needs to be placed on follow-up of students with disabilities after they graduate high school to determine if additional support is needed.

While this data does not provide an answer to the research questions, it does present a gap in practice that should be examined considering the current research findings. Current criteria in place to measure the success of schools highlight an emphasis



of meeting A – G requirements upon graduation from high schools. Departments of Education annual reports consistently show that students with disabilities do not meet this measure; yet this is a success criterion for school districts and emphasis is placed highly on meeting this criterion. Emphasis being placed on meeting A – G requirements for students with disabilities shows a gap in practice due to the lack of focus on students who consistently have low academic performance on these measures. Being college ready is an admirable goal to attain; however, for many students with disabilities, this will not occur. A focus on what students will need to succeed once they leave high school is a practice that should be kept in mind as students are being prepared for life after high school.

In the next section, I will present the answers to the two research questions in accordance with the data that was collected. Furthermore, in the next section I will provide an explanation as to why I believe professional development is a recommended project due to the results, along with an explanation as to how the professional development will be structured to meet staff needs.

### **Research Question 1**

Research question one was, “How do high school special education teachers, a job developer, and transition specialist assist students with mild disabilities to develop self-determination skills as an avenue towards more successful postsecondary adult outcomes?” Collectively, the participants agreed that to develop self-determination in students with disabilities begins with teaching students to be independent and to hold

students accountable for their learning. One of the consensuses was that there are too few opportunities for students to practice independence because everything is done for the students. Participants believe “there was too much hand-holding” or that “some teachers keep the training wheels on too long” and that “students are spoon-fed too long”. While participants agreed that a holistic view of students needs to take place and that the students need support, it was felt that more involvement from the students in the events that affect their lives – IEP and ITP planning, must occur before students can begin to develop self-determination skills.

During the initial interviews, participants had more to say about what could and should be done to help students with disabilities to development self-determination skills; although it was evident that very little was being done in this area. Follow-up interviews were required to investigate the research question further. Additional interview questions were added to be more specific and target the research question to gather direct responses from the participants (Appendix H). When conducting follow-up interviews, participants did have more to say about what they are currently doing with the students they are working with. For example, P2 stated inventories, self-evaluations, creating opportunities for student choice and collaborative opportunities with their peers were some of the methods utilized. P5 and P6 indicated that teaching the skills needed in life after high school are specific ways in which their students are taught to develop self-determination skills.

Participants acknowledged the importance of self-determination skills and equated the development of self-determination with having self-efficacy. While each of the participants were able to discuss ways in which educators could help students with disabilities to develop self-determination skills, each participant was initially unclear as to what was meant by self-determination. After providing an explanation to the participants, each was able to discuss their opinions of self-determination skills development for their students. One participant, when answering the interview question related to how self-determination skills development in students with special educational needs will support students in postsecondary education or employment, agreed that if students with disabilities had a measure of self-determination, they would do better in college or on the job; however, felt the challenge was trying to help the students become self-determined. The participant asked, “How do we teach students to have self-determination in the first place?” This question was one that deserved to be addressed further.

Participants were asked how they assessed students’ current levels of self-determination. Each of the participants reported that all the assessments they complete with the students are informal. Career assessments such as *Career Cruising* and the *College Board Assessments* were utilized by participants. In addition to the online assessments and inventories, participants reported student observations, one-on-one student conversations, and parent questionnaires as additional forms of assessments used

to determine a student's current levels of self-determination. Student portfolios was also an assessment measure used by two of the participants.

### **Research Sub-Question**

Research question two was, "How does students' Individualized Transition Plans (ITP's) reflect self-determination skills support for students with mild disabilities". A review of the students' ITP's provided to me by the participants revealed that self-determination is mentioned in the plan; however, there was no way to determine the type of services or supports that the students would receive to support this transition goal. Within the ITP, annual goals (from the student's IEP) to support student's postsecondary goals are listed. The first goal listed for employment, education or training, and independent living was self-determination. Although self-determination was listed, there was nothing in the ITP that reflected support in this area. In addition, the student's IEP were not in the scope of this project study. Therefore, annual IEP goals were not reviewed as part of the data collection so as to make a determination that would answer this research question. Future research should include a review of the annual IEP goals in addition to the ITP to determine if IEP goals align with transition goals to reflect self-determination skills support.

Participants in this research investigation agreed that self-determination skills support is a viable means for improving the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities. Outdated transition questionnaires, a limited repertoire of transition questionnaires and assessments, as well as lack of training into how to help students

develop self-determination were just a few of the hinderances mentioned by the participants. Therefore, as a result of the above-mentioned, the project for this study was a targeted, uniform, professional development in self-determination skills training for students with disabilities to aid teachers in gaining insights into their instructional practices in self-determination skills training (Brownell & Leko, 2018).

The professional development was delivered to education specialist through a series of workshops that were carried out over a three-day period. The professional development focused on understanding what was meant by self-determination and what self-determination meant to students, teachers, and other stakeholders. In addition, the professional development focused on ways educators could help students with disabilities become active participants in their IEP meetings and in writing their ITP's. Finally, the professional development included resources for educators to assist parents as they work towards developing self-determination skills in their student with a disability.

### **Summary**

Section 2 described the methodology and results of this case study. Section 2 also included the research design, criteria and justification for participant selection, how access was gained to the participants, data collection, analysis, validity, and reliability procedures. A rich narrative to present the study's themes and findings was also included in Section 2. In Section 3, a comprehensive description of the proposed project will be presented. Included in Section 3 are the goals of the proposed project, the rationale for why this genre was chosen for the project, and how the problem is addressed through this

project. A literature review addressing professional development is also included in Section 3. A full description of the project, the project's evaluation plan, and the implications based on the project is also presented. Finally, the implications for social change, the importance of this project to local stakeholders and in the larger context of stakeholders is discussed in the next section.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The problem addressed in this research study revealed that students with disabilities in the focus school were not having successful transitions to postsecondary education or employment. The findings from this current study revealed that special education teachers believed that several issues while students were in school was hindering their postsecondary success. For example, the timeliness with which transition services were implemented, a lack of student independence, and a scarcity of resources were just a few of the barriers mentioned by special education staff participants of this study. Furthermore, findings and the literature reviewed in Section 2 of this study further revealed that special education teachers believed student involvement in their IEP and transition planning was very important because their involvement would enhance their self-awareness and self-determination as a student with a disability.

Additional findings of this study further revealed that special education teachers did not feel they were adequately trained or knowledgeable about teaching students with disabilities how to become self-aware, self-determined individuals. Because of these admissions, providing professional development for new and veteran teachers in developing self-determination skills for students with disabilities seems plausible for closing the skills gap identified in this area (Evers, Vander Heijden, & Kreijns, 2016). Therefore, to aid special education teachers in developing self-determination skills in students with disabilities, I proposed to develop a 3-day professional development series.

The title of the workshop will be, “*Self-Determination Skills Training for Students with Disabilities: An Inside Look for Secondary Education Teachers*”. The professional development is to be held at the focus school as part of the opening professional development workshops offered to special education and general education teachers during the week prior to the opening of school in the fall semester. All teachers will be invited to attend this professional development. Federal policy mandates and researchers concur, that instruction to support self-determination should be linked to the general education curriculum as well as the unique learning needs of students with disabilities (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007). However, special education teachers will be the targeted audience for this professional development as they shoulder the responsibility of providing transition services for their students.

The professional development will be conducted over three full, consecutive days. Each day’s activities began at 8:00a.m., with a morning break at 10:00a.m. for fifteen minutes, lunch between 12:00p.m. – 1:00p.m., and ending at 3:00p.m. The theme for Day 1 of the professional development will: “*What is Self-Determination*”? Attendees will receive background information related to the concept of self-determination and learn what is meant by the term self-determination as it applies to students with disabilities and special educational needs. As an activity, participants will complete the “*Self-Determination Educator’s Scale*”, Form A (Appendix D) by Sharon Field and Alan Hoffman, ([www.beselfdetermined.com](http://www.beselfdetermined.com)). Permission was granted by Dr. Field to use this



scale as part of my research (Appendix E). This scale will allow participants to rate themselves as a means of measuring their own professional capacity.

The theme for Day 2 of the professional development will be “*Assessing Self-Determination Skills Training Implementation*”. On Day 2, attendees will work collaboratively in groups consisting of special and general education teachers to assess their schools’ current levels of self-determination implementation efforts. Using the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool* (Appendix F) resource by Field and Hoffman (2007) as a guide based on the sampler indicators, attendees will rate their current self-determination implementation efforts based on each of the nine quality indicators presented in this assessment tool. As a final activity, groups will synthesize the data to determine their strengths and areas for growth in each of the indicator areas. Note: Permission to use this resource was granted by the publisher, Corwin Press (Appendix G). By determining their areas of strength and growth, participants will be able to use this information on day 3 as they develop plans for self-determination skills training implementation in their classrooms.

The theme for Day 3 will be “*Implementing Self-Determination Skills Training in the Classroom*”. On Day 3, attendees will be instructed in ways in which they can aide students to be more involved in the IEP and ITP processes and how student involvement relates to building self-determination skills and the overall transition process. As a final activity, attendees will have an opportunity to develop and share activities that can be incorporated in the general education and special education classrooms. Utilizing the

information from the self-determination assessment tool completed on day two, participants will have an opportunity to discuss areas of strength and growth as seen by everyone. The goal of these activities will be to aid the participants in providing self-determination skills training for students with disabilities based on the areas for growth taken from the quality indicator checklist created on day 2. Each day of the professional development series will provide an opportunity for the teachers to collaborate with one another and share strategies, which will be built into each day's schedule.

Professional development was chosen as the project format for this study due to teachers' admission of their own lack of preparedness and understanding of how to develop self-determination skills in their students with disabilities. Furthermore, for teachers to continue to grow and develop professionally as they advance in their careers, quality professional development is essential in this career path (Burns & Lawrie, 2015). Also, by engaging in professional development, teacher efficacy is increased, and student learning is optimized (Girvan, Conneely, & Tangney, 2016). As general and special education teachers collaborate during this professional development series on a common goal: developing self-determination skills in students with disabilities, identifying effective strategies to help students develop self-determination skills, and developing instructional strategies that can be applied in the classroom will be the focus.

One of the findings within this study suggested that special education teachers believed that students with special educational needs are coddled for too long throughout their academic careers. The belief was that students with special educational needs should

be allowed to fail to pave the way for future successes. The participants also described the need to teach students with disabilities to be more independent; to take control of their own lives and education, not just having their lives acted upon by others. So, while special education teachers acknowledged the need for students with special educational needs to be in control of their lives, the means with which to teach this skill was lacking. To address the teachers' concerns, a 3-day professional development was designed to provide teachers with the tools and resources needed to be more effective as they help students develop self-determination skills.

The first day of the professional development will focus on introducing participants to the concept of self-determination. Background and history of self-determination will be discussed, along with the nine components of self-determination as discussed by Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes (1998). An educator's assessment scale will be administered to allow the participants to measure their own professional capacity and how those relate to their own self-determination skills as an educator. An evaluation of the professional development will also be given at the end of each day's professional development to gauge participants' understanding of the days' topics and receive feedback for the next days' session.

The second day of the professional development will focus on the role of self-determination skills for students with special educational needs. Participants will explore reasons for self-determination skills training for students with disabilities and the importance of these skills in postsecondary education and employment. Participants will

also view a short video of a student with a disability who described how he was so much more than his disability and the role self-determination played in helping him make this discovery. The afternoon session of the professional development will allow participants an opportunity to complete a self-determination assessment tool to rate their current implementation efforts in this area.

Finally, on the third day of the professional development, participants will have an opportunity to collaborate with one another and develop activities that can be incorporated into the classroom curriculum for transition planning. However, before beginning the collaborative phase, participants will review their individual results from the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment* (Appendix F) completed on day two. Participants will identify ways they are currently meeting the quality standard (strengths) as well as identify areas in need of growth (Field & Hoffman, 2009). After the review of the assessments are completed, participants will group according to subject matter to discuss their ratings.

Ultimately, the groups will need to arrive at a consensus rating for each indicator to begin developing activities to strengthen their current levels of self-determination implementation. To conclude the third day of professional development, participants will be given research-based resources that can be immediately used in their classrooms to measure their student's current strengths and areas where additional support and instruction is needed in self-determination. "*The Arc's Self-Determination Scale*" (Wehmeyer, 1995) (Appendix H) will be used to achieve this goal.

To provide an extensive narration of this project, this section also contains the goals of the project and the rationale as to why professional development was the best genre to address the problem. A review of the literature currently available addressing professional development is also included in this section. A description of the project, its implementation, the resources needed, the supports that currently exist, any potential barriers, as well as the solutions to these barriers will also be addressed. Finally, the implications for social change for the stakeholders and the greater community will be described in this section.

### **Project Goals**

Professional development was chosen as the project genre to address the local problem as described in Section 1, where it is asserted that there are students in high school with mild disabilities who are not having successful transitions from the high school to post-secondary education or employment. The problem of unsuccessful transitions from high school to postsecondary education or employment was addressed by inviting special education teachers and other staff members involved in the transition of high school students to participate in the professional development. The professional development will be structured so that these educators will learn strategies to help students with disabilities develop self-determination skills, with the goal of possibly changing the trajectory of their postsecondary outcomes. In addition, resources will be suggested that special education teachers can use to assess the current self-determination skills of students with disabilities. In addition, resources that can be used to help students,

regardless of their current levels of self-determination to develop self-determination skills to support themselves as they embark upon postsecondary education or employment will be included.

The overall goal of this professional development will be to teach attendees what self-determination skills training entails and how self-determination skills training can support postsecondary transition for students with disabilities. Participants will be able to reflect on their current strengths in implementing self-determinations skills development for students with disabilities. As a result of their assessment efforts, participants will work collaboratively in developing activities that can enhance their self-determination implementation efforts already in existence, coupled with evidence-based practices currently in use.

### **Rationale**

Professional development was chosen as the genre for this project based on teachers' admission that they do not know much about self-determination skills development or how to implement self-determination skills activities into the day-to-day curriculum for students with disabilities. Teachers believed they were ill-equipped to support students in developing self-determination skills. This in part was due to lack of resources and lack of training based on their own admission. Based on the input from the teachers, professional development was chosen as an effective means for addressing the needs of the teachers (Meissel, Parr, & Timperley, 2016). When developing an effective professional development program, several factors must be considered. In addition to

focusing on teacher needs, a goal for the professional development must be established with student achievement in mind as a result. Assisting teachers to develop students' self-determination skills is the desired result of this teacher professional development.

This professional development series will be structured with the goal of enhancing teachers' ability to develop self-determination skills in students with special educational needs. The purpose of conducting an exploratory case study was to provide insight into the experiences of teachers, a transition specialist, and a job developer as they work daily with students with special educational needs as they seek to prepare them for life after high school. Data gathered through the semistructured interviews and review of the Individual Transition Plans revealed explicit themes and sub-themes: a) teach students to be more independent, b) accountability, c) allow failure now to pave the way for future student success, d) peer and alumni mentors needed, e) community role models needed, f) timeliness of transition support, g) lack of resources and support for all stakeholders, h) lack of student involvement/engagement in the IEP and ITP process, and i) the current focus for students with disabilities should be structured to reflect student's current needs. These themes revealed that these special education teachers had strong opinions of what their students needed for postsecondary success; however, these needs were not being met due to the lack of resources and training provided for these educators.

### **Review of the Literature**

In Section 1 of this project study, I discussed Wehmeyer and Schwartz's (1997) theory of self-determination, which supported the framework for this qualitative study.

This literature review consisted of a discussion on the history of transition mandates, the roles of special education teachers, families, community partners, and students in the transition process. I also discussed the current transition practices versus best practices in transition. I continued my review of the literature by discussing the barriers to effective transition planning and a review of self-determination skills.

In this second review of the literature, I discussed the background that led me to determine that professional development was the appropriate genre to address the findings based on my project study data. In this section I also discussed professional education theory and research and how these were used to guide the development of the professional development series, as well as support the content of my project based on my findings in Section 2. A discussion of the concept of professional development and its application to the field of education was discussed in this section. Finally, I concluded this literature review with a discussion of the components of an effective professional development.

The sources that I cited in this literature review were found on Walden University Library Data Bases. *Education Sources*, *ERIC*, *SAGE Journals*, *ScienceDirect*, and *Taylor and Francis Online* were the primary databases used to obtain my resources. Search terms used to conduct this literature review were as follows: *teacher professional development*, *teacher preparation*, *teacher in-service*, *teaching practice*, *teacher professional learning*, *professional education theory*, *teacher knowledge*, *teacher efficacy*, *continuous learning*, *continuous development*, *professional collaboration*, and



*adult learning theory*. The literature review in this section includes 39 sources that address and support the goal of this project.

The goal of the project was to instruct special education and general education teachers on the concept of self-determination and the role self-determination skills play when preparing students with disabilities for life after high school. A secondary goal was to allow participants to self-reflect on their classroom practices' strengths and areas of growth, with an opportunity to collaborate by designing activities they could immediately use in their classrooms to support self-determination skills development in their students.

### **Background**

The task of educating children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the responsibility of the educational system, consisting of teachers in both a general education and special education settings. Students are required to meet their states' academic targets, regardless of race, economic background, or disability status. However, California state test results (<http://www.cde.ca.gov>) would indicate that teachers, specifically, those teaching in urban areas, are not adequately prepared to meet the academic needs of all students, as we find that many of the sub-groups are not meeting the standards, particularly, students with disabilities. Within the focus district, results are similar. Students with disabilities are faring far below their non-disabled peers.

For all students to achieve, teachers must be trained. Teachers must have access to the knowledge and skill sets required to implement evidence-based strategies (State, Simonsen, Hirn, & Wills, 2019) that are essential for student success. Furthermore, for

student knowledge and achievement to improve, teachers need regular collaborative opportunities, whether it is across grade-levels or subject matter (Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015). For students identified with learning disabilities, it is essential that they receive instruction from teachers whose training has been anchored into their practice (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2013) in terms of the content and skills being developed. Gabriel (2011) further noted that ideal teacher training allows teachers to situate their learning in practice. For this type of training to be implemented, teachers need intensive, on-going, and sustained professional development (State et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2013). With this type of professional development, learning outcomes can be greatly affected.

### **Professional Education Theory and Research**

To guide the implementation of this project study, the professional education theory was utilized. Professional education theory has been described as a process whereby teachers learn in and from practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Gabriel, 2011). Furthermore, Ball and Cohen (1999) framed their theory into two parts: questioning and evidence about teaching and learning. In other words, investigating problems of practice and developing strategies to help teachers implement new ideas within their own practice (Kennedy, 2016). Therefore, when examining the professional learning theory and what is needed to make professional learning meaningful, three requirements must be met: professional learning must be centered in practice, professional learning must focus on an investigation of teacher practice, and professional learning must be collaborative (Ball &

Cohen, 1999). For professional learning to benefit teachers, these three elements must be present within their professional learning setting.

When professional learning is centered in practice, new avenues for learning are created (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Instead of the standard “sit and get”, listening to others lecture regarding what practices should be taking place in the classroom, when professional learning is centered in practice, teachers have at their disposal material that is pertinent to their day-to-day teaching. Materials such as student work, assessments, videos of others teaching, or teaching observations are examples of ways to effectively situate the professional development into practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). When professional learning is centered in their practice, teachers are more likely to participate and seek out the advice and expertise of their colleagues (Leko et al., 2015). When professional learning is centered in practice and organized around content, the quality of teaching is improved, which also results in improved student learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

When discussing theories of action related to professional development, Kennedy (2016) asserted that there are two parts to these theories: identification of the central problem of practice and devising a pedagogy that will aid teachers to translate the new ideas into practice. Often professional learning is not geared towards the teachers’ practice which adds to the lack of motivation that is often seen in many professional learning sessions. When the content of professional learning is anchored into practice, teachers’ instructional practices are enhanced (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Young,

2013). In addition, the “spillover effects” (Sun et al., 2013) to other teachers’ practice can go over and beyond the direct effects on teachers who participated in the professional learning; therefore, teachers who participate in professional learning can shape the practices of those who do not participate.

An investigation of teacher practices revealed the need to structure teacher professional learning in a manner that would lead to increased teacher knowledge, skills, and attitudes – which in turn, would lead to positive changes in their practices and improved student outcomes (Desimone, 2009). Further investigations determined that professional learning must provide opportunities for teachers to reflect, question, and analyze their own beliefs in relation to the subject-matter; thus, paving the way for teachers to adapt their new learning around improved teaching practices (McComb & Eather, 2017). Professional learning opportunities need to be action-oriented, with opportunities for teachers to reflect and self-access their own practices (McComb & Eather, 2017).

The professional learning theory also supports the assertion that teacher professional learning needs to be collaborative (Ball and Cohen, 1996; Kennedy, 2016a; McComb & Eather, 2017). Seglem and Garcia (2018) asserted that teacher professional learning should be a space for collaboration and empowerment. Teachers who initiate professional learning do so with a sense of collaboration, so that this space will allow teachers to support and affirm others’ ideas regarding their practice (Seglem & Garcia, 2018). This type of team collaboration is not just among teachers of those with special

educational needs. When professional learning includes time for collaboration among special and general educators, teachers are driven to engage and respond enthusiastically (Seglem & Garcia, 2018). Collaboration skills are also enhanced during professional learning times; however, for collaboration to be effective, teachers must be open and willing to accept ideas different from their own (McCray, 2012) and have a comfort level that allows them to share with other and not be afraid to ask for help when needed (Turner & Ciuksza, 2014).

### **Professional Development**

Professional development in education has been defined as “structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes” (Darling-Hammond, Hyster, & Gardner, 2017). With this definition in mind, it is important for any professional development to be structured in a manner that will change teachers’ classroom behaviors and improve student achievement. While this goal for professional development is vital, the challenge is to ensure teachers understand this goal well enough so that they may ultimately decide independently when they will and should use the strategies presented during the professional development sessions (Kennedy, 2016a). Effective professional development will allow for teachers to increase their capacity; thereby, supporting student learning (Patton et al., 2015).

To support teacher capacity, Darling-Hammond (2017) asserts that providing effective professional development will require a responsiveness to teachers’ needs and

in the context to which teacher learning can take place effectively. Furthermore, for professional development to be effective, the following elements need to be present: a) content focused, b) incorporates active learning, c) supports collaboration, d) uses models of effective practices, e) provides coaching and support, f) offers feedback and reflection, g) has the ability to be sustained over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; State, Simonsen, Hirn, & Wills, 2019). Desimone (2009) concurred with these elements of professional development; but, also added that with collective participation – teachers at the same school – greater benefits will be gained since teacher’s interactions will be maximized. Darling-Hammond, Kennedy (2016a), and Meissel et al. (2016) asserted that the first step in providing effective professional development is to conduct a needs assessment. This was partially done as I completed the semistructured interviews.

While many researchers have pointed to the benefits of professional development (Darling-Hammond (2017); Desimone (2009); Kennedy (2016); Macias (2017), other researchers, Fullan (2007) argue that professional development does not always lead to professional learning. Fullan further argues that outside approaches to professional development is rarely sustained long enough to see changes in teachers’ practices. However, several studies have established that well-designed professional learning can lead to the desired change in teacher practices and student learning outcomes, if implemented effectively (Brownell & Leko, 2018; Coldwell, 2017; Kennedy (2016b); Patton et al., 2015). It should be noted that Fullan was not arguing for dropping teacher professional development; rather, the suggestion is that the current practices in

professional development be reevaluated and then to reinvent how the methods of supporting teachers are implemented.

### **Components of Professional Development**

To be of lasting benefit, implementation of professional development relies heavily on teacher motivation and willingness to alter their current instructional practices. When professional development is not focused on teacher need, motivation to learn is limited (Kennedy, 2016a). For professional development to be meaningful, it must be (a) differentiated, (b) authentic, (c) deliver content knowledge that is applicable to the teachers' current classroom, and (d) infused with time to reflect, and collaborate with others to aide in developing a professional network (Fox, Muccio, White, & Tian, 2015; Matherson & Windle, 2017). When teachers engage in these professional development strategies, their motivation to participate in the professional learning is increased and gives them a sense of control as opposed to perceiving the professional development as mandated (Matherson & Windle, 2017). Overall, the effectiveness of the professional development greatly depends on the connection the learning has to the classroom (Gaikhorst, Beisuizen, Zijlstra, & Volman (2017). These connections should be continually woven throughout the professional development.

When discussing the discrepancy present between what is offered for teachers in professional development and what teachers really want from their professional development, Matherson and Windle (2017) provided a relevant example: teachers are expected to instruct students using methods that will allow them to engage in higher order

thinking and to apply those skills across the curriculum. If these skills are expected of teachers, should not teachers expect to receive professional development that is engaging where they would be able to also engage in higher order thinking skills and apply these skills in their practice? The professional development teachers receive should be just as dynamic as the education they are expected to deliver to students (Matherson & Windle, 2017).

For teachers to provide quality instruction for their students, professional development needs to be carefully designed, focused on how teachers' practice affect their learners (Fox et al., 2015). When the strategies and core features of professional development, as mentioned by Darling-Hammond (2016a) and State et al. (2019), are implemented, teachers accumulate a stronger body of knowledge, and this knowledge in turn allow teachers to make better decisions about how they teach (Brownell & Leko, 2018). While teachers are accumulating a wider body of knowledge when participating in effective professional development, it is also essential that teachers are helped to think strategically about how their teaching will address the larger purpose of education; namely, to support all students in developing the skills and knowledge that will allow them to become contributing members of society (Kennedy, 2016b). Furthermore, when professional development is effective, it enhances and sharpens teaching skills and allows teachers to evaluate theirs and their students' performance and address concerns related to growth (Darling-Hammond, 2016).



## **Project Description**

The participant professional development will be presented using Google Slides. The professional development will be presented over a 3-day period. Each participant will be provided a note tablet to take notes during each session, along with access to the Google slides, should they choose to take notes directly on individual slides during the presentation. A detailed description of the proposed professional development will be included in Appendix A.

I will present the professional development titled, “*Self-Determination Skills Training for Students with Disabilities: An Inside Look for Secondary Education Teachers*”. This professional development will be presented to high school educators during the beginning of the fall semester. As the researcher for this project, it was feasible that I also present this professional development. During the data collection phase of this project study, I had an opportunity to form connections with the participants, while also getting a better understanding of their needs and concerns. These collaborative connections allowed me to focus on the themes that were revealed during the data coding phase.

Special education teachers and general education teachers will be invited to take part in this professional development. The sessions began each day at 8:00am, with an hour lunch beginning at 12:00pm, and concluded daily at 3:00pm. Attendees will be informed that the professional development was created based on data obtained during the semistructured interviews. Areas of need that were revealed indicated that the study

participants needed training on how to develop self-determination skills in students with disabilities, as well as resources and support for teachers and students, to aid in developing self-determination skills.

During the interviews, participants demonstrated a lack of understanding and clarity of the concept of self-determination and the role self-determination skill development can play in the outcomes of students with disabilities. Therefore, day one of the professional development will begin with the participants completing a *Self-Determination Educator's Scale* to rate themselves as self-determined educators. The overall goal of the first day of professional development will be to build the participants' knowledgebase of self-determination and an understanding of how, by having self-determination skills, a positive contribution can be made towards postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

During the interviews, participants also revealed that they believed self-determination skills were important for students with disabilities; however, participants were unaware of how to begin teaching these skills. Therefore, day two of the professional development will focus on participants exploring their current practices towards self-determination skills training. Educators individually, will complete a *Self-Determination Quality Indicator Assessment Tool* (Appendix F). Participants will also have an opportunity to review a variety of transition materials and assessments to determine those appropriate for the students they service and how these can be incorporated as part of transition planning, as opposed to a single lesson in isolation.

Day three of the professional development will give participants an opportunity to synthesize the information completed on day two related to their current levels of self-determination implementation (Field & Hoffman, 2007) in their classrooms. Using the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment* (Field & Hoffman, 2007) (Appendix F), participants will collectively assess three areas: current implementation levels, strengths, and areas of growth. Teacher teams will be formed to discuss each indicator and the scores provided by each participant. The opportunity for discussion is meant to have participants come to a consensus on how well they believed self-determination implementation is occurring at the focus school. The final scores will be the basis for the work during the afternoon session.

After lunch, participants engaged in planning time. Teams will rejoin to discuss the assessment and their final scores. Based on the areas of strength and areas of growth, teams will be given an opportunity to collaborate to design lessons that focus on developing self-determination skills in students with disabilities. As each team keeps their goals in mind, opportunities will be provided for teams to share with the group their plans and how these plans can be turned into action.

It will be suggested that teams schedule a future time when they can assess their progress towards meeting their goals as outlined on the assessment indicator. Furthermore, participants will be encouraged to assess their progress towards promoting the development of self-determination skills in their students with disabilities. Prior to

closure and the final evaluation, I will share and give an overview of a Padlet I will create with resources for transition and self-determination training activities. (Appendix J)

### **Resources and Barriers**

The professional development will be presented using my personal laptop with internet access, an overhead project with internet access, and a clicker to advance each slide as I move about the audience. On day 1 of the professional development, participants will receive a folder as they signed in for the professional development. Each folder will include an agenda for the day (agendas for days two and three will be provided at the beginning of day two and day three), a copy of the Google slides, a note tablet, and a writing utensil, and an Exit Ticket. Each day participants will receive materials needed to engage in the days' professional development.

To deliver this professional development, I will need to have access to the school's library. To ensure that the days for the professional development are available, I will have to contact the school administrator prior to the end of the school year in June 2020. Not taking this advance precaution can potentially be a barrier in September since teachers do return to school early for professional develop and usually during the summer, supplies for the next school year are brought in and stored in the library. In addition, taking this step early, will ensure that I will be added to the school's calendar and the library will be booked for my use.

My laptop will be the medium for which I will deliver this professional development. Barriers that can possibly interfere with the use of my laptop can be

technical issues with my laptop or the school's internet. To address these potential barriers, I will be in contact with the tech person on campus prior to the professional development and during the professional development to ensure my technical needs will be addressed as needed. In the event some unforeseen occurrence happened, and the library is not available, I will also request a backup meeting place for the professional development at the same time I make the request for the library from the school administrator. To ensure that the professional development will be scheduled, and the meeting place at the school site is available on the dates requested, I will stay in contact with the school secretary during the summer and prior to the meeting to confirm.

Another potential barrier for this proposed project can be the actual delivery of this professional development on the school's campus. Since it is uncertain at this time as to how schools will re-open in the fall, I must also entertain the possibility of delivering the professional development virtually. To do so, I will use the *Zoom* for meetings platform. I have been trained and have used *Zoom* platform extensively over the past four months. Should I have to deliver the professional development virtually, this will alter how the professional development will be scheduled. While it will be my intent to hold the professional development over at 3-day period, the day's schedule will have to be altered, as it would not be feasible to expect educators to sit through an 8-hour session each day. Therefore, I will have to condense the professional development to be delivered in three parts, scheduling three consecutive Fridays, which is the current professional development schedule for the focus school.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

To determine the effectiveness of a program, an evaluation plan is essential. The evaluation plan can reveal a program's strengths or areas for growth. As I developed this professional development, I constantly kept my goal in mind. My goal is to provide participants with strategies for helping students develop self-determination skills. Additional goals include participants assessing their current levels of self-determination implementation, articulating their strengths and areas of growth, and developing activities that can be used immediately to help students with disabilities develop self-determination skills. To determine if I met my objective, I would utilize formative and summative assessments.

A formative assessment will be given at the end of each days' professional development activities (Appendix L). The results of the assessment data will inform my next steps in the professional development process. As I work through the professional development series, I will rely on feedback from the participants related to their current needs to inform my next steps. The formative assessment will be geared towards providing substantial feedback for me as the project developer on how much or how little information I need to provide participants. At the conclusion of each day, participants will have an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the days' strengths and areas of need. This feedback will provide me an opportunity to adjust the next days' agenda and resources to reflect the participants' needs, in addition to indicating areas needing to be further addressed.

Day 2 of the professional development will be based on previously designed material and feedback from day 1. The pre-planned activities for the day will be incorporated into the day 2 agenda, along with any questions from the participants from day 1 feedback based on the formative assessment. As I conclude day 2, participants will again be asked to provide feedback from their experiences of the day. On the evaluation, I will ask participants to also provide any information related to areas they may still have questions about or lack clarity. I feel this information will be important to find out before I proceed to the third and final day of the professional development. By having these formative assessments along the way, I can improve my instructional methods and meet the learning needs of my audience.

At the conclusion of the third day of professional development, participants will have an opportunity to complete a final summative assessment (Appendix K). Participants will receive this evaluation by means of a Google Form. The purpose of a summative assessment is to determine what participants have learned during the instructional program (Tolgfors and Ohman, 2016). This summative assessment will also provide me with feedback as to the quality of my professional development delivery. Participants will be asked eight questions related to their views of the professional development, the support they received from administration, and the likelihood of applying what they have learned over the course of the 3-day professional development in their classrooms. The overall evaluation goal of this project will provide needed

information related to the project's effectiveness and significance for educators working with students with special educational needs.

### **Project Implications**

The implications for this project study go beyond the classroom. This project study has implications for social change. The findings from this study can potentially change the way special education teachers and general education teachers prepare students with disabilities for life after high school. The structure of this professional development will be implemented with the goal of providing participants an opportunity to measure their own self-determination skills, discover ways self-determination skills can be developed in students with disabilities, measure their own implementation efforts of self-determination in their classroom, and finally develop activities and lessons that can be utilized to incorporate the development of self-determination skills training for students with disabilities.

As part of the professional development, participants will have an opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues. During this collaboration time, participants will be able to develop a model of teaching self-determination skills development that can be utilized immediately at their school site. Furthermore, the components within this professional development can be modified and adapted so that other schools within the focus schools' district can have a starting point for developing curriculum and strategies to address self-determination skills development to meet the postsecondary needs of students with



disabilities. Resources will also be provided participants that they can adapt and use in their classrooms.

Implementation of this project study is important for several additional reasons. Firstly, the project provides participants an opportunity to develop an understanding of self-determination skills development in students with disabilities and how the development of these skills can translate as they enter life after high school. Secondly, participants can assess their own self-determination skills implementation in their education practice. Thirdly, participants will have an opportunity to access research-based self-determination assessments and other resources that can be utilized immediately as they begin to develop self-determination skills in their students. Lastly, participants will have an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in developing strategies and curriculum that can be used immediately in their own classrooms to enhance their current practices.

Section 4 of this project study addresses the professional development's strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. Furthermore, Section 4 addresses scholarship, project development and evaluation, along with leadership and change. I will also provide recommendations for alternative approaches and a reflection on the importance of this work. Finally, I will conclude with a direction for future research.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

A qualitative research method applying a case study approach was utilized to explore how special education teachers, a job developer, and a transition specialist sought to develop self-determination skills in students with mild disabilities. Through semi-structured interviews and reviews of student's Individualized Transition Plans, data were collected. An in-depth analysis of the data revealed that teachers lacked the necessary training and resources to successfully implement strategies to support the development of self-determination skills in students with disabilities. Subsequently, a project was developed and structured to address the professional training needs of educators involved in implementing transition services for students with disabilities. The results of the study, in conjunction with reviews of current literature furthered my knowledge, thereby, allowing me to propose a project based on professional education theory.

As I conducted this research study, I identified literature that focused on evidence-based practices related to postsecondary outcomes and self-determination skills for students with disabilities. Several bodies of literature were available that addressed postsecondary outcomes and self-determination, therefore, I needed to make sure I reached the point of saturation as I sought and studied the literature. Equipped with this knowledge, I conducted the case study to determine how special educators, a job developer, and a transition specialist develop self-determination skills in students with mild disabilities. My next step was to conduct another review of the literature to design

my project based on a professional development genre. Utilizing the knowledge, I gained through my review of the professional development literature, I designed a 3-day professional development program intended to provide educators with skills and strategies to implement self-determination skills training into their existing transition programs.

As I conducted this research study, I had several opportunities to reflect on the process, the implications of this topic on the field of special education in general, and what I learned throughout this process. I will present these reflections as I proceed in Section 4. Also, in Section 4, I will include the project's strengths and limitations, as well as some recommendations for alternative approaches. Additionally, I have included what I learned about scholarship, leadership, and change through this process. Finally, I will include a discussion on the implications, applications, and directions for future research.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

There are several strengths in my proposed project. Based on the outcome from the study, professional development was the suggested project. Macias (2017) asserts there are three reasons professional development is needed for educators: shifts in education, emphasis on accountability, and establishing a public sphere for educators. As an increased number of students with special educational needs are continually being included in the general education setting, it is important that both special and general education teachers be prepared for this shift in education. Therefore, both groups of

teachers were invited to participate in the professional development to provide this public sphere for collaboration.

In conjunction with Macias' (2017) assertion regarding providing a public sphere for educators, a second strength of this project is that general education and special education teachers were provided an opportunity to collaborate on neutral ground. Participants were encouraged to create dialogue that would benefit one another as they collaborated on their existing practices and development of additional strategies to supplement what is already in place. By having time to collaborate, these participants can build a sense of community within their ranks.

A third strength of this professional development is the resources and research-based strategies participants will have access to. Participants will have an opportunity to engage in self-reflection as they assessed their current implementation levels of self-determination skills training. Participants will have individual time to reflect on their current practices and the strengths within each. In addition, participants can reflect and discuss areas of growth needed in their current practices. After the self-assessments, participants will have an opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues and collectively assess where they are as a school and what areas of growth they have discovered.

Finally, participants will use their self-assessment data to create a plan for activities and strategies to implement in their classrooms to enhance their existing curriculum. By assembling and collaborating, the participants will have an opportunity to learn valuable skills to build community among themselves. In addition, participants who

will be invited to participate in this study are general education teachers and special education teachers. Having these two groups work together can afford each participant an opportunity to hear different perspectives and share their successes and challenges while engaging students in postsecondary preparation. Participants will also be developing skills that may enable them to train others who may not have an opportunity to receive this professional development.

Along with the strengths of this project study, there are also limitations. I sought to recruit about 9 participants when I invited the staff of 13; however, only a total of six agreed to participate in this study. The size of this group presents a limitation for this study. Because of the small number of participants, this study cannot be generalizable to students with more severe disabilities or students without disabilities. Another limitation to this study is the data sources. Semistructured interviews were conducted, and Individualized Transition Plans were reviewed. While the information from the interviews provide a wealth of information, again, the size of the group made the amount of information gathered limited. The Individualized Transition Plans were also a good piece of data; however, because I did not have access to the students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for comparison, I could not make a conclusive determination as to whether or not the IEP goals coincided with the transition plan goals or if the IEP goals addressed self-determination skills training.

Furthermore, while it was my goals to determine how special educators, a job developer, and a transition specialist assists students with mild disabilities to develop

self-determination skills, the initial interviews did not answer this question. In fact, more was discussed about what should be done as opposed to what was currently being done. Secondary interviews provided more insight into the current practices of some of the participants, however, data was scarce.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

As I prepared to address the problem in this study, an alternative approach was considered. My initial thoughts were to create a resource manual for special education teachers to use as they engaged in postsecondary support for their students. Keeping in line with the goal of providing educators with the tools and resources needed to instruct and prepare students with disabilities for life after high school, creating a manual with mini lessons, resources, and activities, all with a transition focus, was an alternative approach. However, this alternative was not within the scope of this study's project genres. Therefore, I had to consider an approach that would provide participants the same resources and information that the manual would have provided; yet fall into the realm of the genres for this project study.

While the creation of a transition manual is not within the scope of this project, the concept of a transition manual would certainly be appropriate and be an alternative approach to simply gathering a few teachers to benefit from the professional development. With a manual that focuses solely on meeting the transition needs of students with special educational needs, all teachers who work with students receiving special education services would be the recipients of such a manual. The manual could

include age-appropriate transition activities that can be implemented at any time. In addition, a transition manual would also address the concern expressed by the participants in this current study, namely, transition beginning too late for students to get the maximum benefit. While not within the scope of this project study, a transition manual continues to be a feasible alternative resource that all teachers can benefit from.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

I have been associated with the field of education for most of my life. As a high school student, my preference for physical education was to tutor at the local elementary school. I also worked at an elementary school for my entire high school career. I left the field of education briefly; however, I quickly returned, where I have now been for over 20 years, although not teaching all these years. All my teaching career (over 12 years) has been in a special education setting, although I have had experiences working in the general education setting as well. As a graduate student, I have had the opportunity to delve deeper into the field of special education. In doing so, I have gained a new perspective on the field and the students I serve. I have gained an in-depth, firsthand understanding of the challenges that students with special educational needs will face as they embark on their post-secondary lives.

As I embarked on this project study, I began to develop a better understanding of the challenges faced not only by students, but also the educators who provide services for them. In the field of special education, the terms self-advocacy and self-awareness are terms often used to indicate these are traits we want to develop in students with

disabilities. Each of these terms however fall under the umbrella of self-determination (Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes, 1998); yet many educators do not understand self-determination as it applies to students with disabilities, nor the role of self-determination skills training in the lives of students with disabilities. I found this to be true as I began to collect data for this project study.

Study participants agreed that self-determination skills were important for students with disabilities to develop; however, not all participants knew how to aide their students to develop these skills. With this knowledge, along with additional themes that were revealed, a professional development series will be constructed. Findings from this project study gave me insight into the daily frustrations of special educators as they seek to provide students with support to prepare them for life after high school.

Additional findings in this study pointed to the importance of not only preparing students to be successful, but also helping them to understand that failure is a sign that learning has taken place. In general, the concept of failure carries a negative connotation; however, it has been asserted by researchers that failure can actually be productive and the secret to student success (Kapur, 2015; Manalo & Kapur, 2018; Swanson & Collins, 2018; Wagner, 2004). The determining factor as to whether failure will be viewed negatively or positively lies with the instructional objectives held in the classroom (Swanson & Collins, 2018). When educators impart to students that failure can be productive and allow them to fail, students learn that failure is an option in the learning process.



As a graduate student and teacher-leader implementing this project study, I have gained a wealth of knowledge related to the transition process for students with disabilities and preparing them for their lives after high school. I have had access to an abundance of research-based resources to enhance my scholarship. As a teacher-leader, I have learned that there is no one solution that fits all students as educators are planning for transition. Teachers, especially special education teachers, need the resources and support of all stakeholders. Students also need resources and support as they are being taught life skills that will aid in their future success.

I have learned that general education teachers also play a vital role in the transition of students with disabilities, especially since many of these students are included in their classes. As a teacher-leader, I have also learned that the education of students with disabilities is a team effort and does not stop once a student graduates high school. Peer alumni can make a difference in the lives of students coming behind them. Giving back through their on-campus visits to classrooms can make a difference. As a teacher-leader I have also learned the importance of putting into practice the strategies and suggestions I impart to others. I have also learned, that as an educator, I set the tone for my classroom environment. The way I view student performance should be positive, even if a student has failed at a task.

## **Analysis of Self as a Scholar, Practitioner, and Project Developer**

### **Self as a Scholar**

The development of this project study will enable me to approach a task that I do not have much experience, delivering professional development. As a scholar, when I first began this journey, my focus was simply on the end, the conclusion of a doctoral program. However, as I continued to progress in the program, so did my scholarship. I realized that I did have a keen interest in the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities and desired to know more about how educators can help make students' postsecondary lives more successful. I began to formulate questions for which I had no answer. The research I had been studying highlighted that there is a problem when it came to the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities. Along the way, I learned to write a prospectus which I outlined a concise problem. I learned to write my first literature review while writing a proposal to address my research question.

While collecting data for this project study, I experienced what many veteran researchers already knew: it is difficult to recruit participants for a research study. This did not deter me, however. Those who did volunteer to participate were invaluable to the insights I gained as a doctoral candidate. I learned how to interview participants and to refrain from interjecting my own personal views and comments, which was a challenge at times. I learned to code data, looking for themes in the data and apply these themes to my project study. As a scholar, I also developed patience and to appreciate the gift I have in educating students with disabilities. While engaged in the entire doctoral process, I began

to see the world of special education in a different light. I began to better understand the depth of what is involved in educating students with disabilities and how important an educator's role is in the lives of these students.

When I initially began this program, I had no idea of the time and commitment that would be required to reach my goal. I had to devote many hours to sitting in front of the computer, not knowing if I was ever going to complete this journey. I have always considered myself to be a good writer; however, good does not equate to quality. I had to learn to accept constructive criticism and apply that feedback to create a quality project. The learning I have experienced while endeavoring this entire project has increased my level of scholarly discourse. The entire doctoral process has been an experience in growth that I have been pleased to have undergone.

### **Self as a Practitioner**

As a scholar practitioner, I had to learn that the writing process is an on-going task. Revisions and omissions are part of this process to develop a quality piece of work. As a practitioner, I learned how to study and research. Through this journey of self-discovery, I learned that I enjoyed research and delving deeper into the literature to support claims and assertions. As a scholar practitioner, I also learned about the importance of social change. It is through change within oneself that strides can be made in society. Sharing knowledge and taking the initiative to educate others can be the catalyst needed to change and reform the educational system, especially the system of supports for students with disabilities. Through the delivery of this professional

development series, it was my desire to provide participants with instructional resources they could immediately put into practice and ultimately affect student achievement and postsecondary outcomes, thereby affecting societal changes.

As a scholar practitioner, I also learned the importance of patience and persistence. I have always said of myself that I have no patience. I usually want immediate gratification. However, while awaiting to receive the many approvals needed throughout this doctoral process, I had time to reflect on my attitude. It was very humbling to learn patience throughout this process. My patience was also tested during the interview process. I had to understand that the potential participants were assisting me. So, I had to adjust. I needed to do more follow-up interviews and be available to accommodate the participants' schedules.

### **Self as a Project Developer**

As a project developer, I began as a complete novice to this process. I have written papers and believed I was good at the process. However, I learned early that I had a lot of learning to do, especially when it came to writing quality research. I learned about methodologies and the importance of selecting a method that would best answer my research question. I was focused on doing whatever was "easy and quick". However, to my delight, when I began to seriously put forth effort into the process, I found a joy beyond compare. I have able to write a prospectus, research proposal, and project study proposal that I am proud of.

My initial thought for a project was a resource manual for special educators; however, I realized that this was not an option for this project study. The purpose of the manual would be to educate special educators about the transition process, provide transition lessons, and provide resources to help students with special educational needs prepare for life after high school. To still convey this information, I decided that a professional development series would be able to accomplish the same goal however, on a smaller platform. After analyzing the themes from the interview transcripts, I concurred with my conclusion; professional development would meet the needs of the participants. In addition to providing instructional strategies for helping students with disabilities to develop self-determination skills, participants would also have access to research-based resources to enhance their instructional practices.

Professional development for educators is essential for growth and staying abreast of the many trends in education. Providing quality professional development is not a task that is limited to one day. When participating in professional development, educators need time to process the information, collaborate with colleagues, and receive feedback from questions that may have arisen through the process of the discourse (Matherson & Windle, 2017). To meet those professional development needs, I propose to design a series to extend over a 3-day period. This professional development is targeted for district and school site employees. This includes a transition specialist, a job developer, general and special education teachers.

On day one of the professional development, as an opening activity, participants will use the post-it notes provided to write down their definition of self-determination. These post-it notes will be posted on a larger poster board within the training room for review later in the session. The goals of the professional development will be introduced to keep the participants focused on the subject matter. Participants will be asked a question: “What do you think are key considerations when lesson planning for self-determination skills training?” As a table group, participants will brainstorm and then create a word cloud based on the key terms generated.

After this activity, participants will be introduced to the component elements of self-determined behavior. After the group discussion, participants will have table conversations and use poster paper to describe or draw their thoughts on ways these behaviors can be taught in the classroom environment. A video resource will also be utilized to highlight an individual with a disability, who is having successful post-secondary outcomes despite his disability and the role self-determination has played in these outcomes. Participants will also complete a *Self Determination Educator’s Scale* (Appendix D) to rate themselves and measure their own professional capacity and the role of self-determination in their professional lives. At the closing of day one, participants will complete an exit ticket as a means of a formative assessments of the days’ professional development.

On day two of the professional development, before we begin with the scheduled activities, I will address any comments or questions from the previous days’ exit tickets.

In addition, if any additional questions arise, I will address those to ensure that participants have a general understanding of yesterday's professional development. After addressing all questions, we will begin with an activity. Table discussions will begin this section of the professional development answering the question, "Why is self-determination important"? An opportunity will be given for participants to share-out to the group. After a 10-minute break, participants will break out into groups. Each participant will complete the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool* (Appendix F). Participants will individually assess their current levels of promoting self-determination skills training. This activity will take us to the lunch hour. After lunch, groups will reconvene. Using each participant's self-evaluation as a guide, each group will discuss strengths and areas of growth and come to a consensus for a group score. This portion of the activity will allow participants to set goals for students and their classrooms on day three. Again, participants will be asked to complete an exit ticket prior to departing for the day.

On day three of the professional development, I will again address questions or comments left on the exit tickets from the previous days' professional development before beginning the activities for the day. Day three of the professional development will be devoted to strategies for implementing self-determination skills training in the classroom. To begin, participants will be invited to use their computers to visit the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment (<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning>).

Participants will have an opportunity to review eight lessons related to transition planning and self-determination skills training. As participants review the lessons, they are instructed to write three to five points from each lesson that they feel could be easily implemented into their classroom activities for transition planning. This activity will take the group to the lunch hour.

After lunch, the participants will have time for individual and group planning. Participants will utilize the Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool results from day two professional development, coupled with the transition lessons from the morning session to engage in planning lessons and activities to be implemented into their classrooms. As participants are planning, I will be available to answer questions and engage with the participants. At the conclusion of day three professional development, participants will be asked to complete a summative assessment of the professional development. I will share a google form with the participants to complete the evaluation. Prior to completing the final evaluation, I will share a Padlet (Appendix J) I created with resources that can be used as the participants continue to provide transition and self-determination skills training for their students.

Throughout the professional development, participants will be engaged and learning, while being motivated to effect change in their current practice (Kennedy, 2016). As participants utilize the resources introduced during this professional development, collaborate with one another, and plan their own transition lessons, they will be adding to their existing repertoire of resources currently in use. As a project



developer, I have gained the confidence to design future professional development sessions to enhance the daily practices of educators. Furthermore, I have had an opportunity to enhance my own daily activities in my classroom as I prepare students for life after high school.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

As I reflect on the entire doctoral process, I have a better understanding of the importance of preparing students with disabilities for their lives after high school. Researchers have noted that although there have been some improvements in the outcomes for students with disabilities (Trainor et al., 2016), individuals with disabilities are still not experiencing the same successes as their non-disabled peers (Morningstar et al., 2016). While transition mandates are written into the IDEA, this should not be the driving force for educators as they work with students with disabilities (Test, 2017). Genuine concern for students with disabilities should motivate educator to recognize the importance of the work undertaken and deliver a quality transition program for students.

Preparing students with disabilities to have successful postsecondary education or employment outcomes is a major factor that should be considered as educators continue to provide these students with support and resources to enhance their success after high school. Students with disabilities can be contributing members of their communities, which is another important factor to be considered as preparation for their postsecondary lives continues. Involving students in the decision-making process regarding their futures can put the students on a clear path to self-advocacy (Wehmeyer, 2007). Students need to

be involved in the planning and preparation of their lives after high school. Student involvement can also lead to better outcomes, both in education and employment (Wehmeyer, 2007). Special education teachers can take the lead in planning and preparation; however, students must be allowed and required to have an active part.

As I engaged in this project study, I had ample opportunities to reflect on what I was learning and how it applied to the current job. Through actively engaging in the research process, learning the intricate functions in the field of special education, I learned several skills that I was able to use immediately. I have learned to collaborate more effectively with parents and their students with disabilities. I have become better familiar with special education laws and how they apply to my daily work. I can effectively explain to general education teachers why students with disabilities should be included with their non-disabled peers. I can discuss the history of special education and how the history of special education has forwarded society to its current status.

In addition, I have become better familiar with the 13 disability categories. Knowing this information as helped me to be a better teacher to the students I service, whom have a variety of disabilities. I have learned to be a better researcher and communicator. As I talk to my administrators and colleagues regarding special education or a special education student, I can support my stance with research-based information to inform and enlighten. I have learned to better communicate with outside agencies servicing students with disabilities and participate as a partner on the student's support

team. The entire doctoral process has helped me to become a better communicator, a better teacher, and a better leader.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The history of special education is complete with instances of students with special educational needs being excluded; both in education and employment (Hansen, Carrington, Jensen, Molbaek, & Schmidt, 2020; Ryan, Randall, Walters, & Morash-MacNeil, 2019; Morgan, Kupferman, Jex, Preece, & Williams, 2017). Public laws, such as P.L. 94-142, ensured an education for all students with disabilities. To combat the negative postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, P.L. 98-199 was passed to provide additional support for these students as they transition from high school. When educators are properly trained to educate and provide the best transition services at their disposal, students with disabilities are given a better opportunity to have more positive post-secondary experiences.

The implications for this project can have the potential to have far-reaching effects. Participants in this professional development will be provided with resources to add to their existent repertoire of resources. Participants will learn strategies for helping students with disabilities develop self-determination skills, which they could share with other colleagues district wide. General education teachers will have an opportunity to collaborate with special education teachers to develop lessons and strategies that can be used to enhance what they were already doing in their classroom. Participants will also have access to current, research-based assessments for developing self-determination

skills and shown how these assessments can be used in conjunction with other transition services already being implemented.

As participants will learn during this professional development about strategies and the resources available to enhance their existing teachings in transition, additional benefits can also be derived on several levels. Students can possibly have more confidence as they enter postsecondary education or employment being the recipients of these new skills and resources participants will receive. While the students may experience some difficulties in their new environments, they can have the confidence that they can succeed. Families can also benefit from the potential impact of this project through the professional development the educators will receive. Armed with the knowledge and understanding of the preparation their child received in the classroom can enable families to have peace of mind that their child can possibly succeed at the next level.

This study's findings were limited by the size of group of educators participating in the study's data collection. In addition, this study was bound to a single school site, which would not make the findings generalizable across other educational institutes. Future research could perhaps extend to include additional schools with similar demographics and populations. This project study could extend even further to include students without disabilities. Whether a student has special educational needs or does not, being prepared to meet the challenges of life after high school can be a daunting experience. A comparative analysis can be conducted to determine the differences in how

students with special educational needs are prepared to meet their postsecondary needs as opposed to how students without disabilities are prepared. While students with special educational needs or disabilities and students without disabilities may have different needs, in the finality, the desire is that all students have postsecondary success.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this doctoral study was to learn how special educators helped students with disabilities to develop self-determination skills. The proposed project for this study is a professional development series aimed at helping participants build their understanding of the concept of self-determination and the role self-determination skills training has in promoting successful postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. The professional development will take place over a 3-day period and is structured to provide resources to help support student achievement and growth as they prepare for life after high school. As I reflected while writing this section, I learned about myself as a scholar, a practitioner, and a project developer. I realized there is much to do in the field of special education and as a leader in the field of education, I am obligated to work towards social change in the field of special education and share my knowledge and findings with others.

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## Appendix A: The Project

### Professional Development Slides Presentation with Presentation Notes

This professional development is targeted for district and school site employees; particularly, individuals involved with the education and support of students with disabilities. This includes a transition specialist, a job developer, along with general and special education teachers. This professional development will be conducted over a three-day period. Included in this professional development will be instructional resources and strategies aimed at supporting teachers as they assist students with disabilities to develop self-determination skills. This professional development will be structured in a manner to augment what these professionals are already doing, thereby enhancing their existing repertoire of useful transition strategies.

Day one of the professional development will focus on learning what is meant by the term self-determination and how it applies to students with special educational needs and disabilities. We will also address self-determination from the standpoint of supporting students as they embark upon their post-secondary goals. Day two of the professional development attendees will focus more on self-determination from the curricular aspect. As a culminating activity for the day, in groups, attendees will assess their current levels of self-determination implementation efforts using the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool* (Field & Hoffman, 2002). The focus of day three of the professional development will be to give attendees an opportunity to collaboratively develop activities that can be infused into their existing curriculum to

support self-determination skills development for students with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Slide 1: Title of Professional Development**

*Self-Determination Skills Training for Students with Disabilities: An Inside Look for Secondary Education Teachers*

**Slide 2: The Problem**

The problem with unsuccessful post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities will be the focus of this study. Students were graduating from high school at focus school; however, they were not having successful post-secondary education, nor employment transitions.

**Slide 3: The Purpose**

The purpose of this study will be to examine how special education teachers, a job developer, and a transition specialist have helped students with disabilities develop self-determination skills.

**Slide 4: Results**

The findings in this study indicated that special education staff felt unprepared to teach students with disabilities how to develop self-determination skills.

**Slide 5: Themes**

Several themes emerged throughout the course of data collection: a) teach students to be more independent, b) allow students to fail now to pave the way for their future success, c) provide peer and alumni mentors, d) the timeliness of transition planning and support,

e) lack of resources and support for all stakeholders, f) student involvement/engagement in the IEP and ITP process, and g) the current focus for students with disabilities needs to be changed to reflect student's current needs.

**Slide 6: Sub-themes**

Accountability and community role models.

**Slide 7: The Project**

This project will be created to provide special educators and general education teachers an understanding of self-determination and the role of self-determination skills training in successful post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. In addition, one of the goals of participation in the professional development project will be to allow special and general educators assess their current levels of promoting self-determination skills training and allow these educators to develop goals for students with disabilities, incorporating self-determination skills training.

**Slide 8: Implications for Educations**

The implementation of this professional development project is important because the concerns of the special education teachers related to teaching students with disabilities to develop self-determination skills was addressed. Furthermore, teachers will be able to assess their current levels of self-determination skills training implementation and set goals, whether these goals are for the individual students, for the classroom, or for the school.



**Slide 9: Implications for Social Change**

This project study can possibly have implications for positive social change. The findings from this study may lead to improved post-secondary education and employment outcomes for students with disabilities, thereby allowing these students to be more productive, contributing members of their communities.

**Day 1****Slide 10: What is Self-Determination?**

Participants will use the post-it notes provided in the supply boxes on each table to jot down their thoughts. These will be revisited at the end of the professional development to determine if the participants would like to add to or remove some of their thoughts.

**Slide 11:** Links to presentation material and resources will be provided

**Slide 12:** Goals:

- To deepen understanding of self-determination and consider tools for transition planning with self-determination in mind
- Assess current levels of self-determination as educators and access resources for self-determination skills training in the learning environment

**Slide 13:** Word Cloud Warm Up (discussion)

- What do you think are key considerations when lesson planning for self-determination skills training?
- What questions do you have?

- We will collaboratively create a word cloud based on key terms generated by participants

**Slide 14:** Professional Development – Elements of self-determine behavior

Goal: participants will learn about self-determination skills development in students with disabilities.

Component elements of self-determined behavior was described and discussed:

- Choice-making skills
- Decision-making skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Goal-setting and attainment skills
- Self-regulation/self-management skills
- Self-advocacy and leadership skills
- Positive perceptions of control, efficacy, and outcome expectations
- Self-awareness
- Self-knowledge

As each of these components are discussed, participants will have an opportunity to have table conversations and use poster paper to describe or draw their thoughts on some ways these skills can be taught in the classroom environment.

**Slide 15: Video Resource**

Video resource highlighting (Kevin Fortunato), an individual with a disability who is having successful post-secondary outcomes despite his disability and the role self-determination has played in these outcomes.

<https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/2018/01/08/delawareans-help-open-new-world-disabled-student/952696001/>

**Slide 16: Activity: “Self-Determination Educator’s Scale”**

Participants will complete this scale to rate themselves and measure their own professional capacity and the role of self-determination in their professional lives.

**Slide 17: Closure and Evaluation**

Participants will be asked to write any closing comments they have on a post-it note and add it to the comment board. In addition, time will be allotted for questions before participants are asked to complete the days’ evaluation. Participants will complete the 3-2-1 Exit Ticket before departing the day.

**Slide 18: Day 2 – Assessing Self-Determination Skills Training Implementation**

Before I begin the professional development for today, I will address comments left on the 3-2-1 Exit Ticket from the previous days’ professional development.

Participants will be given an opportunity to comment and ask questions as needed. My goal will be to ensure there are no unanswered questions before we begin the new day’s activities.

**Slide 19 – Why is Self-Determination Important?**

Participants will explore reasons why self-determination is important for students with disabilities and the role of self-determination in successful post-secondary education and employment. Table discussions will lead this section of the professional development and afterwards, participants will share-out their thoughts to the group.

**Slide 20:** Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool

Participants will be placed in groups of special and general educators to assess their schools' current levels of self-determination implementation efforts. First, participants will individually assess their current levels of promoting self-determination skills training using the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool* (appendix K) by Field and Hoffman (2007).

**Slide 21:** Collaborative Activity

The afternoon session will allow groups to re-convene to come to a consensus with a group score, discussing their strengths and areas of growth. This step will allow participants to set goals for students and classrooms.

**Slide 22:** Closure and Evaluation

Participants will be asked to write any closing comments they have on a post-it note and add it to the comment board. In addition, time will be allotted for questions before participants are asked to complete the days' evaluation. Participants will complete the 3-2-1 Exit Ticket before departing the day.

**Slide 23:** Day 3 – Welcome and Review

Before I begin the professional development for day 3, I will address comments left on the 3-2-1 Exit Ticket from the previous days' professional development. Participants will be given an opportunity to comment and ask questions as needed. My goal will be to ensure there are no unanswered questions before we begin the new day's activities.

**Slide 24:** Implementing Self-Determination Skills Training in the Classroom

The activities and engagement for Day 3 of the professional development will provide an opportunity for participants to look at sample lessons related to student participation in transition planning. For this activity, we will utilize the Self-Directed Transition Planning lessons from the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment

(<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning>) from the University of Oklahoma.

Participants will review eight lessons and will be instructed to write three to five points from the lessons that they feel could be easily implemented into their classroom activities for transition planning. In addition, participants will be asked to identify areas where they believe self-determination skills training is being addressed in the lesson. Access to this resource is open to the public on the University's website. The following permissions are granted and printed on each lesson's PowerPoint: "Permission is granted for the user to duplicate the student materials and PowerPoint files for educational purposes. If needed, permission is also granted for the user to modify the PowerPoint files and lesson materials to meet unique student needs".

**Slide 25:** Awareness

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/awareness-lesson>.

**Slide 26:** Terms and Concepts of Transition

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/terms-and-concepts-of-transition-planning>.

**Slide 27:** Visions of Employment

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/vision-for-employment>.

**Slide 28:** Visions of Post-Secondary Education

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/vision-for-post-secondary-education>.

**Slide 29:** Visions of Adult Living

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/vision-for-adult-living>

**Slide 30:** Course of Study

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/vision-for-adult-living>

**Slide 31:** Connecting Services

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/connecting-services>

**Slide 32:** Summary of Performance

<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning/summary-of-performance>. Each lesson is designed to facilitate the transition planning between students, their parents, and educators from high school to life after high school. These lessons are designed for teachers to teach their students the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in transition planning based IEP meetings.

**Slide 33:** Individual and Group Planning

The afternoon session of day 3 will be devoted to individual and group planning.

Utilizing the *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool* results, coupled with the transition lessons from the morning session, participants will engage in planning lessons and activities focused on transition and self-determination skills development.

This will also be an opportunity for me to engage more with the participants and discuss or address unanswered questions that may still be lingering.

**Slide 34:** Conclusion and Evaluation

Participants will be invited to complete the final professional development evaluation on the google form. The link will be provided. Before participants complete the evaluation form, I will share with them a Padlet (Appendix J) I created with resources they can use to further assist them as they provide transition and self-determination skills training for their student

## Professional Development Evaluation Form

Thank you for participating in the professional development: "Self-Determination Skills Training for Students with Disabilities: An Inside Look for All Educators". Please complete the following survey/evaluation to provide feedback regarding your participation.

Check One

Educator

School Leader

Grade Level (check all that apply)

9th

10th

11th

12th

Date/s of Professional Development attendance:

Date

1. Which of the following statements best describes the primary purpose of the Self-Determination professional development (select one)

To communicate new ideas for me to consider using in my classroom

To provide an opportunity for me to learn from other teachers

To help me understand the purpose of self-determination skills training

To help me apply/implement self-determination skills training in my classroom

Not clear

Other (specify)

2. Which of the following describes the usefulness of the Self-Determination professional development: (select one)

It was a good start

It was a good start, but I have a lot of questions

It was a good start and I look forward to using the new ideas in my classroom

It provided everything I need to use the new ideas in my classroom

I don't think that these ideas will work very well in my classroom

It's too soon to tell

3. Indicate the extent to which the Self-Determination professional development met your professional learning needs (select one)

It addressed my professional learning needs completely

It addressed some of my professional needs

It did not address my professional learning needs

This professional development did not help much because I was already familiar with this topic



4. To what extent was the Self-Determination professional development aligned to the school's goals for preparing students with disabilities for life after high school (select one)

The professional development was very closely aligned with goals for instructional improvement.

The professional development was somewhat aligned with goals for instructional improvement.

The professional development was not aligned with goals for instructional improvement.

The professional development was inconsistent with goals for instructional improvement.

Not sure.

5. Which of the following statements best describe the support you received from your principal or special education administrator to participate in the Self-Determination professional development (select one)

The principal strongly encouraged me to participate.

My special education administrator strongly encouraged me to participate.

I did not discuss this professional development with my principal.

I did not discuss this professional development with my special education administrator.

6. Which of the following statements best describes the support you receive from your principal/special education administrator to apply what you learn in professional development in your classroom.

My principal/special education administrator encouraged me to apply what I learned in my classroom.

My principal/special education administrator has encouraged me to apply what I learned in my classroom and has offered to help.

My principal/special education administrator has not encouraged me to apply what I learned in my classroom.

I do not discuss information from professional developments with my principal/administrator

7. Which of the following best describe the likelihood that you will apply what you learned in the Self-Determination professional development in your own classroom (select one)

I have already practiced this skill in my classroom

I have already practiced this skill in my classroom, and it seemed to work well.

I have already practiced this skill in my classroom, but it was not appropriate for my students.

I look forward to practicing this skill in my classroom in the next few weeks.

I look forward to practicing this skill in my classroom later on during the school year.  
 I would like to practice this skill, but I don't have the materials that I need.  
 I don't think that these things will work with my students.

Other:

8. Which of the following statements best describes how the Self-Determination professional development compares to other professional development in which you have participated during the last six months (select one)

This professional development was more useful than other professional development that I have participated in.

This professional development was about the same as other professional development that I have participated in.

This professional development was less useful than other professional development that I have participated in.

I don't have an opinion.

I don't have an opinion because I haven't participated in any other professional development in the last six months.

Other:

If you would like to receive additional resources related to self-determination skills training, please add your name and email address below.

Your answer

Submit

Exit Ticket

3 things I learned today...

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2 things I found interesting...

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

1 question that I still have...

- \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### **Transition Questions**

- What is your perspective on the development of self-determination skills as a viable means of improving post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities?
- How can educators promote the development of self-determination for students with disabilities?
- How do you assess a student's current levels of self-determination?
- What are some effective ways that schools can create learning opportunities, as well as a culture for the development of self-determination for students with disabilities?
- In what way do you think the development of self-determination skills will support students with disabilities as they embark upon post-secondary education or employment?

### Appendix C: Follow-up Interview Questions

1. How do you instruct your student in what it means to be a self-determined individual?
2. What methods or strategies do you use to assess your students' current levels of self-determination?
3. In what ways do you help your students to develop self-determination skills?
4. How do you ensure that students are able to make their own decisions regarding their post-secondary goals or even advocate for themselves?

## Appendix D: Self-Determination Educator's Scale – Form A

Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Please explain)

1

## Self-Determination Educator Scale - Form A

Sharon Field, Ed.D. and Alan Hoffman, Ed.D.

www.beselfdetermined.com

Please rate yourself on the following items by circling the appropriate number. The rating scale ranges from 0 (very low) to 4 (very high).

	In your professional capacity to what degree do you					Please circle the number against each item indicating its Importance to you.				
	Very low				Very high	Very low				Very high
1. know your strengths.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
2. know your dreams and aspirations.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
3. know what is important to you.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
4. take care of yourself.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
5. accept and value yourself.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
6. know your rights and responsibilities.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
7. set goals.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
7. anticipate consequences of your actions.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
8. use creative strategies and solutions.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
10. take risks.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
11. effectively communicate.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
12. access resources and support.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
13. evaluate outcomes of your actions.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
14. enjoy your success.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
15. make appropriate adjustments to improve your performance.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
16. have a philosophy of education.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
17. have a personal vision that guides your work.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
18. use your content area knowledge.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
19. update your content knowledge.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
20. use your pedagogical skills.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
21. update your pedagogical skills.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
22. use your time to work on tasks that are important to you.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
23. manage your time to complete required tasks.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
24. know what you can or cannot influence in the system.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
25. know how to get what you need from the system.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4

Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Please explain)

2

	Very low					Very high				
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
26. experience supportive relationships with others.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
27. adapt to the community's influence on the school.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
28. select strategies to meet the circumstances in your school community.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
29. reflect on your role in the educational process	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
30. make changes based on consideration of your role in the educational process.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
31. model self-determined behaviors.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
32. teach planning skills.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
33. teach others to value themselves.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
34. promote involvement in individualized planning.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
35. promote involvement in decision-making.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
36. provide opportunities for choice.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
37. encourage a variety of solution strategies.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
38. encourage appropriate risk-taking.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
39. support others to take chances.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
40. encourage supportive relationships.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
41. provide accommodations for individual differences.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
42. provide support for individual needs.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
43. listen carefully to others.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
44. provide constructive feedback to others.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
45. convey your expectations to others.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4

**Demographic Information**

**Years of service:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade level:** Elementary \_\_\_\_\_ Middle/Jr. High \_\_\_\_\_ High School/+ \_\_\_\_\_ All levels \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:** African-American \_\_\_\_\_ Asian or Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
 Native American \_\_\_\_\_ White, non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Permission to Use SD Educator's Scale

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**From:** Sharon Field  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 3, 2020 10:38 PM  
**To:** FELICIA BURTON  
**Subject:** Re: Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool

Yes, absolutely, I would be delighted if you would share the resources as part of your professional development. If you are looking for ways to help get your results out to the field, I would be happy to include an article on my blog describing your intervention and results. Just let me know if and when you're interested.

Sharon

On May 3, 2020, at 5:14 PM, FELICIA BURTON <[Felicia338@msn.com](mailto:Felicia338@msn.com)> wrote:

Thank you Dr. Field for your quick response to my request. Dr. Wehmeyer provided me with the link to the 2BSD website and I did find the Self-Determination Educator Scale, along with the Early Steps To Self-Determination resource. I would like to ask if you would grant me permission to share these resources with my colleagues as part of my professional development and share the resource links for self-determination?

Thank you again.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

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**From:** Sharon Field  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 3, 2020 4:50 PM  
**To:** FELICIA BURTON  
**Subject:** Re: Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool

Hi Felicia,  
I'm glad you found the material useful. Any permission requests would need to be sent to Corwin Publishers as they now hold the copyright. I believe that they typically provide permission for use for research purposes, but they are the people from whom you would have to receive permission. If you haven't done so already, you might want to take a look at [www.beselfdetermined.com](http://www.beselfdetermined.com). We have several instruments and curricula on the site that are available free of charge, including a Self-Determination Teacher Perception Scale. Best wishes for a successful PD and dissertation.

Sharon

Sharon Field Hoffman, Ed.D.

Professor Emeritus, College of Education, Wayne State University

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## Appendix F: Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool

**Self-Determination Quality Indicators**  
**Sharon Field, EdD, and Alan Hoffman, EdD**  
**College of Education, Wayne State University**

The quality indicators were designed to help school and program teams assess their current self-determination implementation efforts. To inventory present levels of a school or program's performance relative to the self-determination quality indicators, it is recommended that team members identify for each quality indicator ways in which they are meeting the standard as well as areas for improvement. It is also suggested that teams assign a numerical rating for each indicator on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high). It may be helpful to have each member of the team rating each of the indicators individually first and then come together as a team to discuss their ratings and arrive at a team consensus rating. Alternatively, teams may choose to assign ratings to each quality indicator through group discussion.

The information from the self-determination self-assessment can be used to set goals for improving the opportunities provided by the program to prepare students in knowledge, beliefs and skills that will help them to be more self-determined. These goals may be at the personal, classroom, school and/or district levels.

To develop a program that is focused on preparing students to be self-determined, it is essential to *act* on the goals developed. Developing and meeting regularly with a supportive team that holds each member accountable for working toward their goals can help assure that goals and plans are turned into action.

The final step in the self-determination process before it re-cycles is "Experience Outcomes and Learn." At a specified point in time, teams need to assess their progress related to promoting student self-determination and celebrate their accomplishments. They also need to determine new goals for their program based on the experience and new knowledge they have developed. It is recommended that program self-assessment be conducted on at least an annual basis after the initial inventory to provide the opportunity for on-going and continuous self-improvement.

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **General Education:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Special Education:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade Level:** \_\_\_\_\_ **District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Team Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#1: Knowledge, skills, and attitudes for self-determination are addressed in the curriculum, in family support programs and in staff development.</b></p> <p>1. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <p><i>A framework is used to guide systematic infusion of self-determination components in the curriculum. (e.g., Field &amp; Hoffman, 1994; Ward &amp; Kohler, 2001; Wehmeyer, 1996)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A formal curriculum is used with students to specifically teach knowledge, skills, and beliefs for self-determination.</i></li> <li>• <i>Faculty and staff are provided with inservice opportunities to develop self-determination-related skills, such as self-assessment of professional strengths and weaknesses, goal setting, time management.</i></li> <li>• <i>Parent-to-parent support groups focused on parent advocacy are available for families.</i></li> </ul>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;"><i>not</i></td> <td colspan="2"></td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;"><i>fully</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">DK</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<i>not</i>			<i>fully</i>		<i>implemented</i>	1	2	3	4	DK					<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Areas for Growth:</b></p>
<i>not</i>			<i>fully</i>														
<i>implemented</i>	1	2	3	4													
DK																	

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#2: Students, parents, and staff are involved participants in individualized educational decision making and planning.</b></p> <p>1. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students and parents are invited to attend I.E.P. meetings and they are encouraged to actively participate in those meetings.</i></li> <li>• <i>Students are provided with instruction to help them prepare for active participation in the I.E.P. process.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>not</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>fully</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>DK</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> </tr> </table>		<i>not</i>		<i>fully</i>			<i>implemented</i>		<i>implemented</i>		<i>DK</i>	1	2	3	4	<p>Areas for Growth:</p>
	<i>not</i>		<i>fully</i>														
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<i>DK</i>	1	2	3	4													

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#3: Students, families, faculty, and staff are provided with opportunities for choice.</b></p> <p>1. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students participate in their course selection.</i></li> <li>• <i>Students can choose from several options as to how they will complete class assignments.</i></li> <li>• <i>Families are provided with options about meeting times for conferences.</i></li> <li>• <i>Families have meaningful input to the educational decision-making process.</i></li> <li>• <i>Faculty and staff are encouraged to express preferences and negotiate regarding teaching assignment and other duties.</i></li> <li>• <i>Faculty participate in the decision-making process related to curriculum standards and selection of curriculum materials.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>not</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>fully</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>DK</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> </tr> </table>		<i>not</i>		<i>fully</i>			<i>implemented</i>		<i>implemented</i>		<i>DK</i>	1	2	3	4	<p>Areas for Growth:</p>
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	<i>implemented</i>		<i>implemented</i>														
<i>DK</i>	1	2	3	4													

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#4: Students, families, faculty, and staff are encouraged to take appropriate risks.</b></p> <p>1. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students are provided with an opportunity to explore coursework and career opportunities that are new to them.</i></li> <li>• <i>Families are encouraged to suggest and experiment with new strategies at home to support the accomplishment of educational objectives.</i></li> <li>• <i>Faculty and staff are encouraged and supported, through the staff development and the supervision/evaluation process, to try new teaching strategies.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="865 331 927 380"><i>not implemented</i></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="935 331 997 380"></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="1005 331 1066 380"><i>fully implemented</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="865 380 927 401">DK</th> <th data-bbox="935 380 997 401">1</th> <th data-bbox="1005 380 1066 401">2</th> <th data-bbox="1005 380 1066 401">3</th> <th data-bbox="1005 380 1066 401">4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5" data-bbox="865 401 1149 989" style="height: 280px;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>not implemented</i>			<i>fully implemented</i>		DK	1	2	3	4						<p>Areas for Growth:</p>
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<p><b>#5: Supportive relationships are encouraged.</b></p> <p>1. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Peer support programs, such as peer tutoring, peer mentoring, and peer counseling, are provided.</i></li> <li>• <i>Students have the opportunity to participate in team projects.</i></li> <li>• <i>Families are invited to participate in informal school activities where positive relationships are formed.</i></li> <li>• <i>Team teaching is supported.</i></li> <li>• <i>Mentoring is provided for new teachers.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="865 993 927 1041"><i>not implemented</i></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="935 993 997 1041"></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="1005 993 1066 1041"><i>fully implemented</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="865 1041 927 1062">DK</th> <th data-bbox="935 1041 997 1062">1</th> <th data-bbox="1005 1041 1066 1062">2</th> <th data-bbox="1005 1041 1066 1062">3</th> <th data-bbox="1005 1041 1066 1062">4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5" data-bbox="865 1062 1149 1684" style="height: 325px;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>not implemented</i>			<i>fully implemented</i>		DK	1	2	3	4						<p>Areas for Growth:</p>
<i>not implemented</i>			<i>fully implemented</i>														
DK	1	2	3	4													

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#6: Accommodations and supports for individual needs are provided.</b></p> <p>1. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Accommodations necessary for students, family members, and staff with disabilities (e.g., interpreters, modified texts, architectural features) are provided.</i></li> <li>• <i>Universal design principles are used in instructional and architectural design.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="857 317 933 346"><i>not implemented</i></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="933 317 1031 346"></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="1031 317 1128 346"><i>fully implemented</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="857 346 933 375">DK</th> <th data-bbox="933 346 982 375">1</th> <th data-bbox="982 346 1031 375">2</th> <th data-bbox="1031 346 1079 375">3</th> <th data-bbox="1079 346 1128 375">4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5" data-bbox="857 375 1128 961" style="height: 200px;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>not implemented</i>			<i>fully implemented</i>		DK	1	2	3	4						<p><b>Areas for Growth:</b></p>
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DK	1	2	3	4													

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#7: Students, families, and staff have the opportunity to express themselves and be understood.</b></p> <p>2. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All students are encouraged to participate in student government activities.</i></li> <li>• <i>Opportunities are provided for dialogue among students and staff during the school day.</i></li> <li>• <i>The expression of divergent opinions by students, families, and staff is encouraged by administrators.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="849 1026 925 1056"><i>not implemented</i></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="925 1026 1023 1056"></th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="1023 1026 1120 1056"><i>fully implemented</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="849 1056 925 1085">DK</th> <th data-bbox="925 1056 974 1085">1</th> <th data-bbox="974 1056 1023 1085">2</th> <th data-bbox="1023 1056 1071 1085">3</th> <th data-bbox="1071 1056 1120 1085">4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5" data-bbox="849 1085 1120 1675" style="height: 200px;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>not implemented</i>			<i>fully implemented</i>		DK	1	2	3	4						<p><b>Areas for Growth:</b></p>
<i>not implemented</i>			<i>fully implemented</i>														
DK	1	2	3	4													

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#8: Consequences for actions are predictable.</b></p> <p>3. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Clearly delineated behavior management plans are available for each classroom.</i></li> <li>• <i>The schoolwide code of conduct for students is explicitly stated.</i></li> <li>• <i>The managerial and decision-making structure of the school is clearly understood by students, families, faculty, and staff.</i></li> <li>• <i>Students can state their goals for educational programs.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>not</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>fully</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>DK</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>1</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>2</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>3</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>4</i></td> </tr> </table>		<i>not</i>		<i>fully</i>			<i>implemented</i>		<i>implemented</i>		<i>DK</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<p><b>Areas for Growth:</b></p>
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<i>DK</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>													

Quality Indicators	Current Implementation Level	Strengths:															
<p><b>#9: Self-determination is modeled throughout the school environment.</b></p> <p>4. <i>Sample Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The principal assumes leadership responsibility for conditions within the school.</i></li> <li>• <i>Teachers assume leadership responsibility for conditions in their classrooms.</i></li> <li>• <i>All school community members (e.g., students, parents, faculty, and staff) are actively involved in the school improvement process.</i></li> </ul>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>not</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>fully</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>implemented</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>DK</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>1</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>2</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>3</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>4</i></td> </tr> </table>		<i>not</i>		<i>fully</i>			<i>implemented</i>		<i>implemented</i>		<i>DK</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<p><b>Areas for Growth:</b></p>
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<i>DK</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>													

## Appendix G: Permission to Use Resources



Thank you for your submission. Please retain a copy of this confirmation as a record of your authorization and your acceptance of the applicable terms.

**Submission Details:**

First Name: Felicia

Last Name: Burton

Email: felicia338@msn.com

School/Institution Name: Walden University

City: Moreno Valley

State: California

Zip: 92555

Publisher Name: Corwin Press

Publication Title: Self-determination: Instructional and Assessment Strategies

Article/chapter/video/ image title: Resource A: Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool

How will you be using this content?: Sharing with teachers during a professional development as part of my dissertation project

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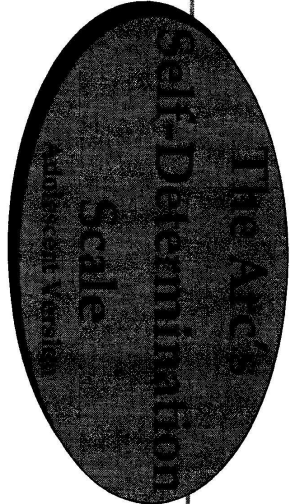
### Appendix H: The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale-Adolescent Version is a student self-report measure of self-determination designed primarily for use by, and normed with, adolescents with cognitive and developmental disabilities. The scale has two primary purposes:

- To provide students and educators a tool that assists them to identify student strengths and areas of support and instructional need in self-determination; and
- To provide a research tool to examine the relationship between and among self-determination and factors that promote/inhibit self-determined behavior, to evaluate the efficacy of interventions to promote self-determination, and for use with related research activities

The scale has 72 items and is divided into four sections. Each section examines a different essential characteristic of self-determined behavior: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization. Each section has unique directions that should be read before completing the relevant items. Scoring the scale (see Procedural Guidelines for scoring directions) results in a total self-determination score and subdomain scores in each of the four essential characteristics of self-determined behavior. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines ([http://www.beachcenter.org/education\\_and\\_training/self-determination/default.aspx](http://www.beachcenter.org/education_and_training/self-determination/default.aspx)) provides information for administration and scoring the measure and a discussion about the use of self-report measures in general. The scale should not be used until the administrator is thoroughly familiar with these issues.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale-Adolescent Version was developed by Michael Wehmeyer and Kathy Kelchner at The Arc of the United States with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement #H023J20012. Questions used in Section One (Autonomy) were adapted, with permission from the authors, from the Autonomous Functioning Checklist. Questions used in Section Four (Self-Realization) were adapted, with permission from the author, from the short form of the Personal Orientation Inventory. Appropriate citations for both instruments are available in The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines. The Arc gratefully acknowledges the generosity of these researchers.



By Michael Wehmeyer, Ph.D., Principal Investigator  
Kathy Kelchner, M.Ed., Project Director  
Self-Determination Assessment Project

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_



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**Directions: Check the answer on each question that BEST tells how you act in that situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Check only one answer for each question. (If you have a disability that limits you from actually performing the activity, but you have control over the activity by using a personal care attendant, answer like you performed the activity.)**

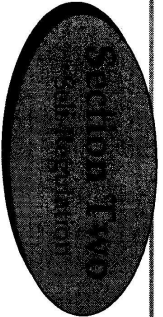
**1A. Independence: Routine personal care and family oriented functions.**

**1A. Subtotal** \_\_\_\_\_

1. I make my own meals or snacks.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
2. I care for my own clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
3. I do chores in my home.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
4. I keep my own personal items together.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
5. I do simple first aid or medical care for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
6. I keep good personal care and grooming.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
<b>1B. Independence: Interaction with the Environment.</b>				
<b>1B. Subtotal</b> _____				
7. I make friends with other kids my age.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
8. I use the post office.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
9. I keep my appointments and meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance
10. I deal with sales people at stores and restaurants.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance

<p><b>1C. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Recreational and leisure</b></p>					<p><b>1C. Subtotal</b> _____</p>				
<p>11. I do free time activities based on my interests.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>12. I plan weekend activities that I like to do.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>13. I am involved in school-related activities.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>14. My friends and I choose activities that we want to do.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>15. I write letters, notes, or talk on the phone to friends and family.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>16. I listen to music that I like.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p><b>1D. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Community involvement and interaction</b></p>									
<p><b>1D. Subtotal</b> _____</p>									
<p>17. I volunteer in things that I am interested in.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>18. I go to restaurants that I like.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>19. I go to movies, concerts, and dances.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>20. I go shopping or spend time at shopping centers or malls.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					
<p>21. I take part in youth groups (like 4-H, scouting, church groups).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance</p>					

1E. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Post-school directions				1E. Subtotal	
22. I do school and free time activities based on my career interests.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
23. I work on school work that will improve my career chances.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
24. I make long-range career plans.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
25. I work or have worked to earn money.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
26. I am in or have been in career or job classes or training.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
27. I have looked into job interests by visiting work sites or talking to people in that job.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
1F. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Personal Expression					
1F. Subtotal _____					
28. I choose my clothes and the personal items I use every day.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
29. I choose my own hairstyle.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
30. I choose gifts to give to family and friends.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
31. I decorate my own room.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	
32. I choose how to spend my personal money.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance	



**Directions:** Each of the following questions tells the beginning of a story and how the story ends. Your job is to tell what happened in the middle of the story, to connect the beginning and the end. Read the beginning and ending for each question, then fill in the BEST answer for the middle of the story. There are no right or wrong answers. Remember, fill in the answer that you think BEST completes the story.

**2A. Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving.**

33. **Beginning:** You are sitting in a planning meeting with your parents and teachers. You want to take a class where you can learn to work as a cashier in a store. Your parents want you to take the Family and Child Care class. You can only take one of the classes.

**Middle:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ending:** The story ends with you taking a vocational class where you will learn to be a cashier.

Story Score \_\_\_\_\_

35. **Beginning:** Your friends are acting like they are mad at you. You are upset about this.

**Middle:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ending:** The story ends with you and your friends getting along just fine.

Story Score \_\_\_\_\_

34. **Beginning:** You hear a friend talking about a new job opening at the local bookstore. You love books and want a job. You decide you would like to work at the bookstore.

**Middle:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ending:** The story ends with you working at the bookstore.

Story Score \_\_\_\_\_

36. **Beginning:** You go to your English class one morning and discover your English book is not in your backpack. You are upset because you need that book to do your homework.

**Middle:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ending:** The story ends with you using your English book for homework.

Story Score \_\_\_\_\_

<p>37. <b>Beginning:</b> You are in a club at school. The club advisor announces that the club members will need to elect new officers at the next meeting. You want to be the president of the club. <b>Middle:</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ <b>Ending:</b> The story ends with you being elected as the club president.  Story Score _____</p>	<p><b>2B. Goal setting and task performance</b></p> <p><b>Directions:</b> The next three questions ask about your plans for the future. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. For each question, tell if you have made plans for that outcome and, if so, what those plans are and how to meet them.</p> <p>39. Where do you want to live after you graduate?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have not planned for that yet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I want to live _____ List four things you should do to meet this goal: 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____</p>
<p>38. <b>Beginning:</b> You are at a new school and you don't know anyone. You want to have friends. <b>Middle:</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ <b>Ending:</b> The story ends with you having many friends at the new school.  Story Score _____</p>	<p>40. Where do you want to work after you graduate?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have not planned for that yet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I want to work _____ List four things you should do to meet this goal: 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____</p> <p>41. What type of transportation do you plan to use after graduation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have not planned for that yet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I plan to use _____ List four things you should do to meet this goal: 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____</p>

**Directions:** Check the answer that BEST describes you. Choose only one answer for each question. There are no right or wrong answers.

42. I usually do what my friends want...or  
I tell my friends if they are doing something I don't want to do.

49.     
It is no use to keep trying because that won't change things...or  
I keep trying even after I get something wrong.

43. I tell others when I have new or different ideas or opinions...or  
I usually agree with other peoples' opinions or ideas.

50.     
I have the ability to do the job I want...or  
I cannot do what it takes to do the job I want

44. I usually agree with people when they tell me I can't do some thing...or  
I tell people when I think I can do something that they tell me I can't.

51.     
I don't know how to make friends...or  
I know how to make friends.

45. I tell people when they have hurt my feelings...or  
I am afraid to tell people when they have hurt my feelings.

52.     
I am able to work with others...or  
I cannot work well with others.

46. I can make my own decisions...or  
Other people make decisions for me.

53.     
I do not make good choices...or  
I can make good choices.

47. Trying hard at school doesn't do me much good...or  
Trying hard at school will help me get a good job.

54.     
If I have the ability, I will be able to get the job I want...or  
I probably will not get the job I want even if I have the ability.

48. I can get what I want by working hard...or  
I need good luck to get what I want.

55.     
I will have a hard time making new friends...or  
I will be able to make friends in new situations.

49.     
I can get what I want by working hard...or  
I need good luck to get what I want.

56.     
I will be able to work with others if I need to...or  
I will not be able to work with others if I need to.

50.     
I can get what I want by working hard...or  
I need good luck to get what I want.

57.     
My choices will not be honored...or  
I will be able to make choices that are important to me.

**Section 3 Subtotal** \_\_\_\_\_



**Directions:** Tell whether each of these statements describes how you feel about yourself or not. There are no right or wrong answers. Choose only the answer that BEST fits you.

<p>58. I do not feel ashamed of any of my emotions.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>66. I don't accept my own limitations</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>59. I feel free to be angry at people I care for.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>67. I feel I cannot do many things.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>60. I can show my feelings even when people might see me.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>68. I like myself.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>61. I can like people even if I don't agree with them.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>69. I am not an important person.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>62. I am afraid of doing things wrong.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>70. I know how to make up for my limitations.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>63. It is better to be yourself than to be popular.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>71. Other people like me.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>64. I am loved because I give love.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>72. I am confident in my abilities.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>65. I know what I do best.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>Section 4 Subtotal</b> _____</p>

**Scoring Step 1:**  
Record the raw scores from each section:

**Autonomy**  
 1A =   
 1B =   
 1C =   
 1D =   
 1E =   
 1F =   
 Domain Total:

**Self-Regulation**  
 2A =   
 2B =   
 Domain Total:

**Psychological Empowerment**  
 3 =   
 Domain Total:

**Self-Realization**  
 4 =   
 Domain Total:

**Scoring Step 3:**  
Using the conversion tables in Appendix A, convert raw scores into percentile scores for comparison with the sample norms (Norm Sample) and the percentage of positive responses (Positive Scores):

Autonomy	Sample Norm	Positive Scores
1A = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1B = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1C = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1D = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1E = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1F = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Domain Total: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Self-Regulation</b>		
2A = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2B = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Domain Total: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Psychological Empowerment</b>		
3 = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Domain Total: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Self-Realization</b>		
4 = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Domain Total: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Self-Determination</b>		
Total Score = <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Scoring Step 4:** Fill in the grid for the percentage of positive responses.

Autonomy																		
Self-Regulation																		
Psych Empower																		
Self-Realization																		
Self-Determination																		

**Scoring Step 5:** Fill in the graph for the percentile scores indicating the percent positive responses.

	One	Two	Three	Four	Total					
Autonomy										
Self-Regulation										
Psych Empower										
Self-Realization										
Self-Determination										
	100%	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10



## Appendix I: Permission to Use Arc's Self-Determination Scale

---

**From:** Wehmeyer, Michael L.  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 3, 2020 10:22 AM  
**To:** FELICIA BURTON  
**Subject:** RE: ZC website for ARC SD Assessment and the SD Quality Indicators

Hi Felicia,

I own the copyright for The Arc's Self-Determination Scale and make it freely available, and it is fine to use in the manner you have described. I'm not sure what versions are available online, but in 2013-2014 we updated the form and procedural guidelines, and those versions are attached.

The quality indicators tool you reference was developed by my co-author, Sharon Field, and she owns the copyright. By virtue of including it in the book, the intent was to allow teachers to copy and use it, so I don't think there would be any problem using it as you wish, but if you need to get explicit permission, you'll have to contact Dr. Field. The contact information through <https://www.beselfdetermined.com/about/> might be the most recent way to contact her.

Best,  
Mike

---

**From:** FELICIA BURTON <Felicia338@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 3, 2020 12:07 PM  
**To:** Wehmeyer, Michael L. <wehmeyer@ku.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: ZC website for ARC SD Assessment and the SD Quality Indicators

Hello Dr. Wehmeyer,  
My name is Felicia Burton and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University working on my dissertation on examining self-determination skills training for students with disabilities. I have reviewed so much great literature and research on self-determination and I have come across two resources I'd like to use as part of my dissertation.

The first is the "The Arc's Self-Determination Scale". I found a copy on the Beach Center web page as well as in the book, "Self-Determination: Instructional and Assessment Strategies". I have read that the Arc's SD Scale is freely available for use; however, I wanted to clarify that statement as it relates to my dissertation. For the project I am creating, I am writing a professional development series and would like to distribute copies to the teachers attending the PD. Is this acceptable us.

Also, within the same book, there is a Self-Determination Quality Indicators Assessment Tool (Resource A) that I would also like to use in my PD. I would like to ask your permission to use both of these resources as I put together this PD series for general and special educators at my school site.

Thank you in advance for considering my requests.

Sincerely,

Felicia A. Burton

---

## Appendix J: Self-Determination Resources

padlet

padlet.com/felicia338/Bookmarks

## Self-Determination Resources

A collection of resources to assist educators with self-determination skills training.

FELICIA338 MAY 06, 2020 01:39AM

FELICIA338 JUN 12, 2020 03:16PM

### TransCen, Inc.

Improving the lives of people with disabilities through meaningful work and community inclusion

#### TransCen, Inc | Career and workforce development

TransCen and our projects continue to operate during the current public health emergency. As an organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals through meaningful work and community inclusion, we have been closely monitoring developments related to COVID-19/Coronavirus and its impact on the individuals we serve, their families, and all of our partners and stakeholders.

TRANSCEN



#### Explore careers

Mapping Your Future is a nonprofit organization committed to helping students, families, and schools navigate the higher education and student loan processes through trusted career, college, and financial aid counseling and resources.

MAPPINGYOURFUTURE



FELICIA338 JUN 12, 2020 03:01PM

### Division on Career Development and Transition

The mission of DCDT is to promote national and international efforts to improve the quality of, and access to, career/vocational and transition services

#### home

COMMUNITY.CEC.SPED.ORG



FELICIA338 JUN 12, 2020 03:08PM

### Iris Center

The IRIS Center is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions.

#### IRIS

"After showing teachers the modules and other resources, I've noticed that the amount and the quality of the performance indicators that can be seen in the classrooms have increased."

VANDERBILT



FELICIA338 JUN 12, 2020 02:57PM

### Self Determination Theory

Leading theory on human motivation and how it applies in education.

#### selfdeterminationtheory.org - An Approach to human motivation & personality

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of motivation. It is concerned with supporting our natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective and healthy ways. SDT has been researched and practiced by a network of researchers around the world. The theory was initially developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M.

SELFDETERMINATIONTHEORY



FELICIA338 JUN 12, 2020 03:05PM

### Mapping Your Future

Career and College Resources and Assessments

FELICIA338 JUN 12, 2020 02:53PM

### National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

Creating Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities to Achieve Successful Futures

**Welcome to the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Web Site**

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs from 2000-2008, during which time it partnered with six major organizations also focused on the secondary education and transition of youth with disabilities.

NCSET



FELICIA338 JUN 07, 2020 09:18PM

**I'm Determined**

FELICIA338 MAY 19, 2020 05:10PM

**Understood**

Dedicated to shaping a world where millions of people who learn and think differently can thrive at home, at school, and at work.

**Home**

Explore our back-to-school resources to better prepare and build important relationships. Skip to content We're dedicated to shaping a world where millions of people who learn and think differently can thrive at home, at school, and at work. What we do Supporting you throughout your journey I want to be more inclusive.



UNDERSTOOD

FELICIA338 JUN 07, 2020 09:30PM

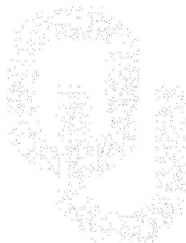
**Who's Future Is It Anyway?**

A STUDENT-DIRECTED TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS

**Whose Future Is It Anyway?**

College of Education / Centers / Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment / Transition Education Resources / Whose Future Is It Anyway?

OU



FELICIA338 MAY 18, 2020 02:52PM

**Transition Coalition**

Maximizing professional development opportunities for secondary transition and college and career readiness of youth with disabilities.

**Transition Coalition | Providing online information, support, and professional development on topics related to the transition from school to adult life for youth with disabilities.**

Toolkit to assist state and local agencies develop interagency agreements for coordinating Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Help students with and without disabilities leave high school with a diploma. Complete this survey to help the University of Oklahoma develop a new transition assessment (the TAGG-A) for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

TRANSITION COALITION



FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

**NASET**

**Transition Services**

For the child with a disability, this developmental period can be fraught with even greater apprehension, for a variety of reasons. Depending on the nature and severity of the disability, special education professionals and parents may play more of an ongoing role in the child's life even after he or she leaves secondary education.

NASET



FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

**Welcome to the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Web Site**

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs from 2000-2008, during which time it partnered with six major organizations also focused on the secondary education and transition of youth with disabilities.

NCSET



FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

**CEC**

**CEC Transition Resources**

The world has changed tremendously for students with disabilities over the past several decades. Laws have been put into place to make college more accessible, and the public's understanding of students with disabilities has evolved. These students are graduating from the most competitive institutions in the country with the highest degrees and going on to fulfilling careers.



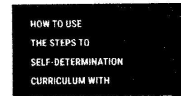
SPED

**Resource Links**

Links to useful resources for transition planning

**2BSD Related Instructional Resources - 2BSD: To Be Self-Determined**  
 © 2020 2BSD: To Be Self-Determined. All rights reserved.

2BSD: TO BE SELF-DETERMINED



FELICIA338 JUN 07, 2020 09:20PM

**I'm Determined**

The Elements of I'm Determined comprises the essential skills necessary for increasing self-determination skills.

**Elements of I'm Determined**

The Elements of I'm Determined comprises the essential skills necessary for increasing self-determination skills. This poster is a simple reminder of the Elements and their definitions.

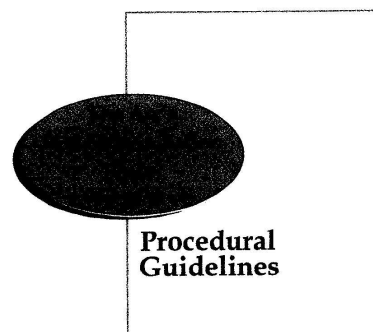
IMDETERMINED



FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

**Arc's Self-Determination Procedures**

How to use the Adolescent Scale



**The\_Arc\_s\_Self\_Determination\_Scale\_Procedural\_Guidelines\_2014.p**  
 PDF document  
 PADLET DRIVE

FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

**NTACT**

NTACT is a Technical Assistance and Dissemination project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Rehabilitation Services. NTACT's purpose is to assist State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, State VR agencies, and VR service providers in implementing evidence-based and promising practices ensuring students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, graduate prepared for success in postsecondary education and employment.

**homepage | NTACT**

NTACT hosts "toolkits" of resources on a variety of topics, related to secondary education and services for students with disabilities and the capacity building associated with improving such education and services. These toolkits provide an overview and then step-by-step guidance and resources on the specific topic.

TRANSITIONTA



FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

**Arc's Self-Determination Scale for Adolescents**

An assessment tool that he help educators tailor a transition plan to the student

**Adobe Acrobat**  
 Adobe Acrobat  
 ADOBE

FELICIA338 MAY 08, 2020 11:24PM

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