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It's My Life: Self-Determination Ideas
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Presented by
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Developed for
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Outreach Programs
It’s My Life: Self-Determination Ideas
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Figure 1 Young woman walking down a sidewalk using a travel cane.

Setting My Stage: Experiences of a 7 Year Old

Figure 2 Collection of 3 images: Penny as 2nd grader, patch from Camp Marcella, and bottom of a swimming pool.

Terms

- **Self-determination** is achieved when an individual knows and does what is best for him or herself (decides a course of action).
- **Self-advocacy** occurs when an individual shares his or her needs and desires effectively with others.

Figure 3 A boy looks at his clipboard touching items with his pencil eraser.
Talk to Your Neighbor

- Pick an age group from the list.
- List 4-6 benchmarks (accomplishments) for children with visual impairment of that age to obtain.
  
  Preschool
  - Early Elementary
  - Late Elementary
  - Middle School
  - High School

- Examples:
  - Participating in an IEP meeting
  - Taking public transit
  - Choosing where to sit during a demonstration

Children Have to Know Their Own Strengths and Needs to Plan and Carry Out Goals

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**Self-Determination Checklist**

**Student Self-Assessment**

**Student Name:**

**Date:**

**Self-Determination skills help you to know:**
- your self
- your goals
- supports you need to reach your goals

**Use the following scale to rate the statements below:**
- 3 if almost always/most of the time
- 2 if sometimes
- 1 if rarely or never

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I set goals to get what I want or need.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make plans for reaching my goals.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check my progress on how I am doing toward my goals.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend my IEP Meetings.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in my IEP Meetings.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the goals listed in my IEP.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At school, educators listen to me when I talk about what I want or need.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home, my parents listen to me when I talk about what I want or need.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have others in my life who help me to accomplish my goals.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask for help when I need it.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I need, what I like and what I enjoy doing.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tell others when I need, what I love and what I enjoy doing.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help to make choices about the supports (educational services) and accommodations that I need in school.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can describe my learning difficulties to others.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I have control to direct my life.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take care of my personal needs (clothes, shoes, meals, grooming).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make friends with others my age.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make good choices.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that working hard in school will help me to get a good job.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 4 Document: Self-Determine Checklist, Student Self-Assessment

Steps for Children to Undertake in Problem Solving & Goal Setting
• Exploration:
  o What is the problem?
• Understanding:
  o What is the solution/goal?
• Action:
  o What is the plan to achieve the solution/goal?
• Evaluation:
  o Is the plan working?

Ways Adults Can Support Children with Problem Solving & Goal Setting
• Active Listening: What’s bothering you? How can I help?
• Information Sharing: Provide ideas – brainstorm possible solutions.
• Positive Feedback: Share your observations of what might/is working.
• Guiding to Other Ideas: That might work, but it could backfire because of ____.

Learning Nonverbal Communication
• Eye contact or facial orientation:
  o Tip: point nose to noise
• Body posture:
  o Tip: chin parallel to earth
• Gestures:
  o Tip: demonstrate popular signals such as “high five” or “ok”
• Facial expression:
  o Tip: practice happy, sad, angry, fearful faces
Learning Nonverbal Communication

- **Voice tone, inflection, volume:**
  - Tip: listen to actors & analyze their efforts
- **Timing:**
  - Tip: pay attention to feelings & wait to engage if out-of sorts
- **Content:**
  - Tip: think before speaking, write down key points to make!

**Assertiveness: A Balancing Act**

*Figure 5 Picture of a seesaw with the following text:*

**Raised End of Seesaw:**
- Strong Communication
- Ability to Negotiate
- Demonstrating Competence

**Lowered End of Seesaw:**
- Poor Communication
- Difficulty Negotiating
- Incompetent
- Children do not need to provide a lot of detail.
Self Disclosure:

Let me tell you about what I need because of my visual impairment.

- Children do not need to provide a lot of detail.
- Children need to be specific in the type of assistance they need and the WHY.
- Help children learn what type of information is appropriate for different types of people (e.g., friends, teachers, workers in the community).

Meet Luke: A 2nd Grader with LCA at a School Where Classmates Had Questions

Video

Self Knowledge

- An understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses:
  - Interests and abilities (both talents and learned skills)
  - Values
  - Liabilities or challenges
- Recognition of feelings
  - Internally – what’s pleasing, scary, irritating, and so forth
  - Externally – how does one’s behaviors, including what one says, impact others
- Awareness of rights and responsibilities
My Progress Report: As Shared by a 1st Grader

Video

The IEP Process is a Natural Opportunity for Self Determination

- A 3rd grader sat through the IEP meeting very uncomfortably.
- At the end of the meeting she was asked if she had any questions.
- The answer: “What is an IEP?”
- A goal was added to her IEP to learn about what an IEP is and to participate in the process.
- The student drew about the process to prepare for the next year’s meeting.

The IEP Process is a Natural Opportunity for Self Determination

Figure 6 Two pictures drawn by the student, the first is of her strengths and the second of state mandating testing.

The “I’m Determined Project” has Some Great Resources to Empower Children

Figure 7 Document: Student Rubric for IEP Participation
Two Books that are Useful When Helping Students Understand the IEP Process

- *Implementing Ongoing Transition Plans for the IEP: A Student-Driven Approach to IDEA Mandates* by Pat McParland, 2005

Models are Essential

- Use natural opportunities to model self-determination skills.
- Build opportunities for children to practice self-determination skills into lessons and activities within home, school and the community.
- Support children in finding role models who have goals, know how to problem solve and assert themselves.

Supporting Children in Developing Self-Determination Skills

- Provide many opportunities for choice making.
- Don’t answer questions from others, rather have others interact with the child.
- Brainstorm together and role play how children can respond in new or uncomfortable situations.
- Teach children problem solving skills
- Teach children assertiveness skills.
- Support children in understanding their disability and their abilities.
- Provide children realistic feedback, both positive and constructive.
- Encourage children to seek out role models both with and without visual impairments.
- Think 1 year, 3 years, 5 years, and more ahead. What does the child need to master to succeed then?
Self-Determination, Social Skills, and Being Part of the Larger Community

Video

Resources

- TSBVI’s Independent Living curriculum: www.tsbvi.edu
- ECC Essentials: Teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum to Students with Visual Impairments (Allman & Lewis, AFB Press)
- FamilyConnect web site http://www.familyconnect.org/

Web Sites and Articles

Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
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Figure 8 TSBVI logo.

Figure 9 IDEAs that Work logo and OSEP disclaimer.