

Teaching Self-Determination Starts NOW



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What is Self-Determination

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Being self-determined is about acting as the *causal agent* in one's life (Shogren et al., 2015). Causal agents have the skills and attitudes that enable them to make or cause things to happen in their lives.

People who are self-determined self-initiate and self-regulate their actions to solve problems, make decisions, and set goals that impact their lives.

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Why is this important?

Individuals with disabilities frequently experience **poor outcomes upon leaving the school system**. (low employment, minimal control over small and large decisions impacting their lives)

Improving self-determination skills improves **autonomy/interdependence** and **overall quality of life** now, and in the future

Students become more self-determined as they identify their **interests and preferences**, **set and work toward goals** aligned with those interests and preferences, engage in **problem solving** and **decision making** as they encounter barriers in working toward their goals, and **advocate** for themselves and their needs.

These actions are critical for **all** students and are often embedded across the curriculum. However, students need support to **learn and practice** these skills in an integrated way if they are to lead self-determined lives.

Elements of Self-Determination

Choice Making

Decision Making

Problem Solving

Goal Setting

Planning

Goal Attainment

Self- Management

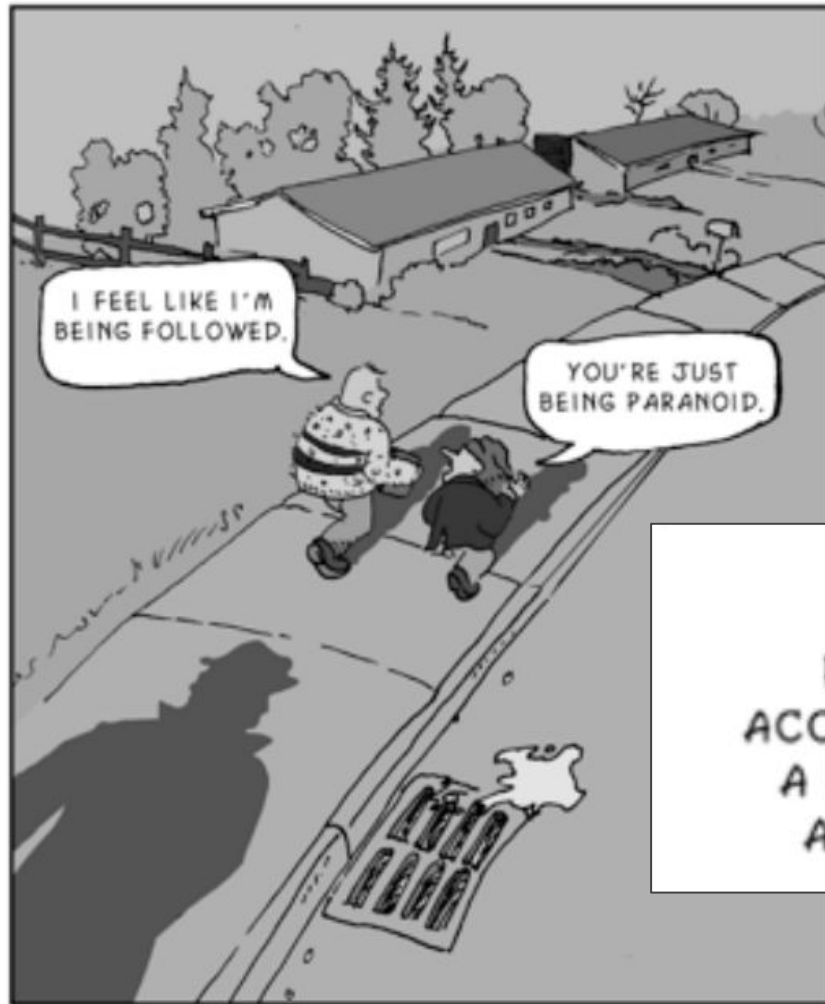
Self-Advocacy

Self-Awareness

Self- Regulation

Self-Knowledge

Barriers to Self-Determination in Schools



THE SHADOW KNOWS:
RODNEY'S SUSPICIONS WERE ACCURATE. UNBEKNOWNST TO HIM, A PARAPROFESSIONAL HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO BE HIS SHADOW.

Cartoon Credit:
Michael Giangreco, Ph.D., Kevin Buelle

What are barriers to supporting self-determination in school?

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Emphasis on compliance in special education and clinical settings

TIME - e.g. implementing person centered planning

Lack of knowledge for how to embed SD skills in an authentic manner

Moving beyond superficial choices

Students may not have a meaningful role in their IEP

Students may find the IEP overwhelming and/or triggering

Families choosing to exclude students from their IEP (e.g. anticipate negative experiences)

Family values collectivistic - less focused on self-management and self-advocacy pieces

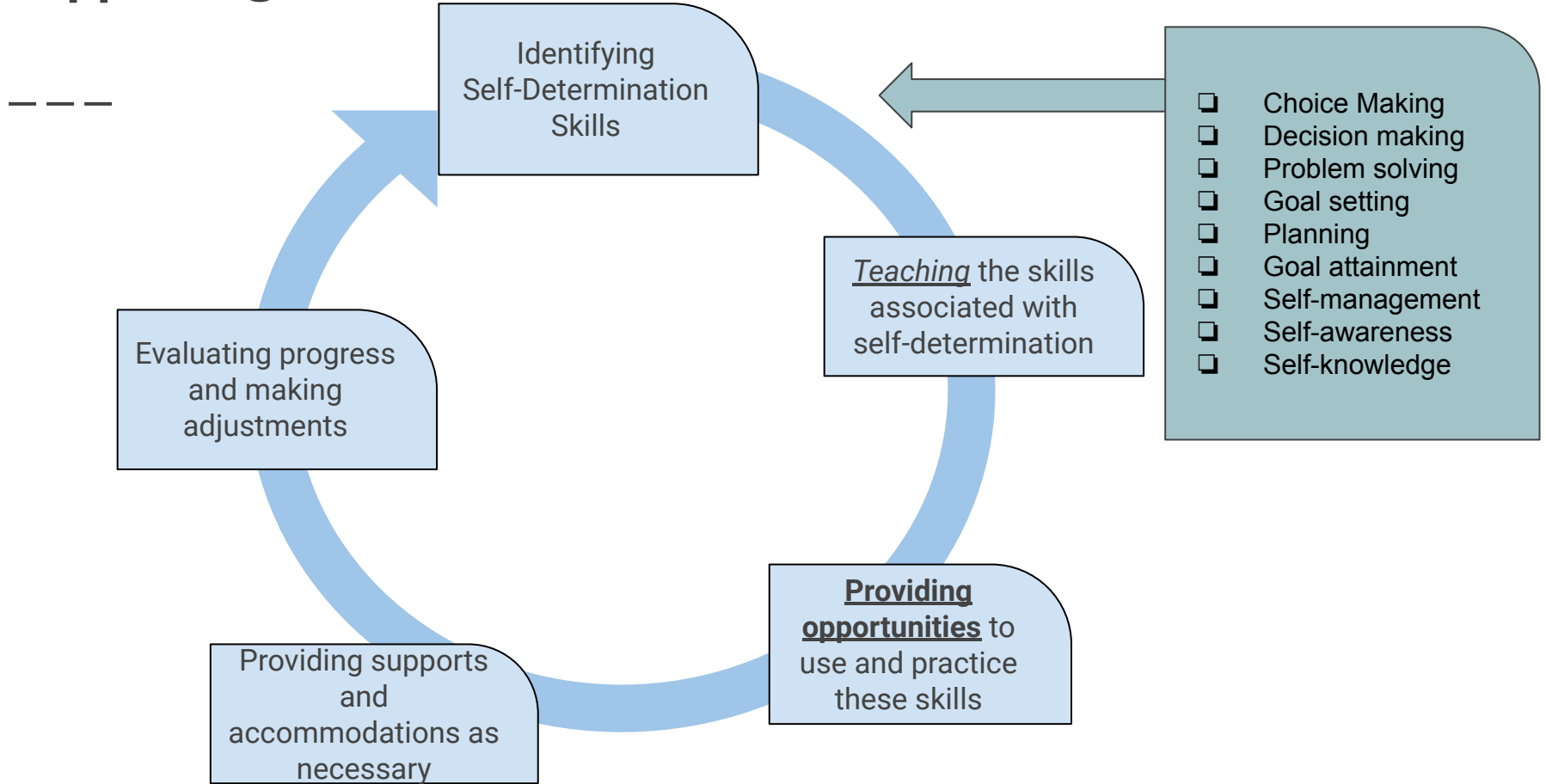
Educator ideas about “the right way to be independent”

Authentic communication access a challenge, esp for linguistically diverse families

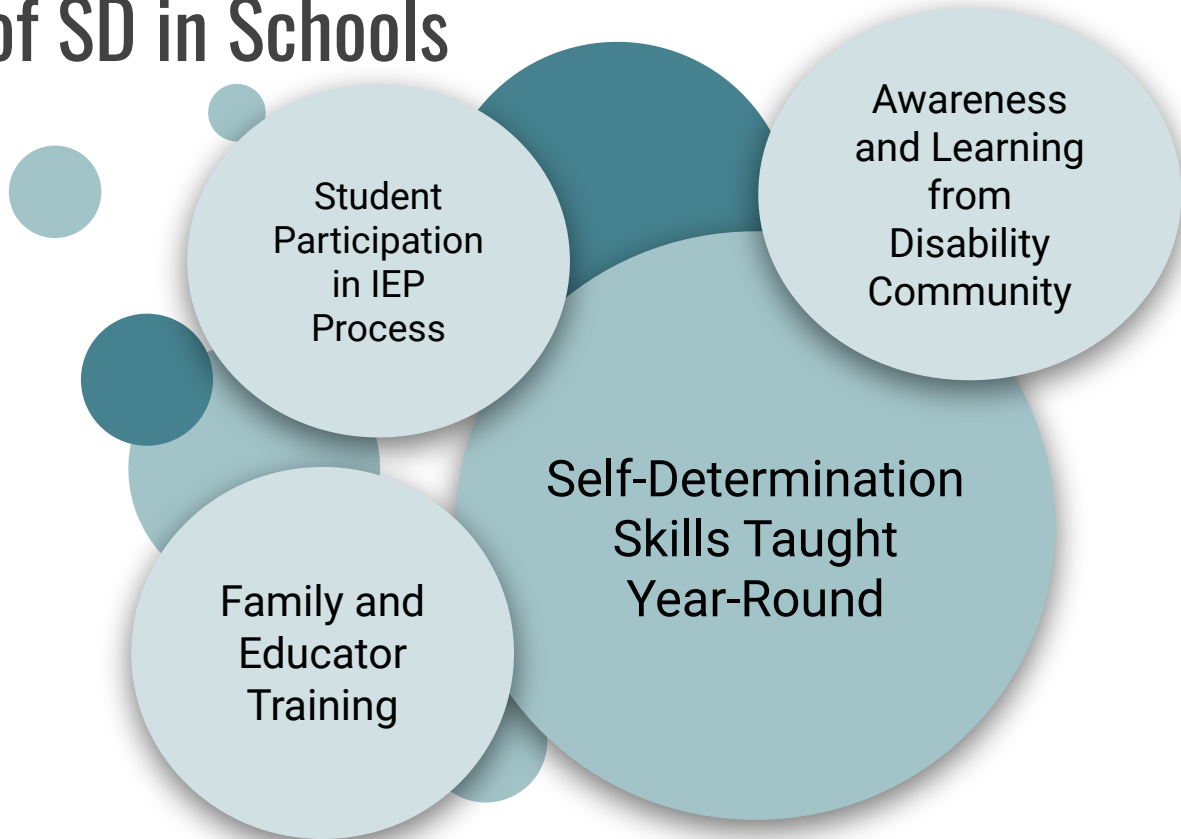
Paraprofessionals - **limited training**, teachers and parents may be afraid of fading supports.

LOW EXPECTATIONS

Supporting Self-Determination in Schools:



Components of SD in Schools



What do goals related to self-determination look like?

Some examples of skills to target . . .

- Serena will rank different supports and activities to **indicate preferences**
- Micah will **use a checklist** and AAC to direct others for transitions in and out of his wheelchair
- When working on **small group projects** with peers, Cynthia will suggest topics, solutions, and actions toward completing the project
- Trevor will choose, and engage in, a **self-regulation activity** (stand up in back of class, move seats, use a “fidget,” drink water) to extend engagement in class activities
- Taylor will practice negotiation and self-advocacy skills by **using AAC to achieve preferred outcomes** (more break time, preferred activities, etc).
- When assigned a classroom task, Sarah will either begin, **ask a peer for guidance**, or . . .
- When selecting options on high-or low-tech AAC, Caty will **use the “something else”** option
- Sami will **identify at least one (academic, non-academic) goal for herself, identify relevant steps, and will monitor her own progress on a weekly basis, and adjust goal-related activities accordingly throughout the academic year.**
- Select a goal related to standards (e.g. DLM, CCC) and identify steps toward achievement (what tools, what supports)
- Will use low or high tech AAC to **indicate desire continue or terminate an activity**

Examples of SD Within the IEP Process

Before IEP:

Collaboration with families to determine how students will participate in their IEP

Families (and students, depending on student) complete self-determination survey

Student input on their strengths in preparation for meeting, depending on student, input on goals and priorities for meeting

Student selects work samples, photos, videos of them engaged in activities related to strengths and developing skills

Teachers review [SD standards](#) and incorporate strengths and areas to develop in PLOP and goals. For very young students and students with extensive needs, consider foundational SD skills, such as self-regulation, expressing preferences, rejecting, etc.

Student invites team members to their IEP meeting

During IEP:

Student introduces team members, showcases accomplishments, agrees or disagrees with team members throughout the meeting, signs their own IEP.

Collaboration with students and families and entire team to determine at least one goal related to self-determination (see samples and standards, consider range of SD skills)

Determine how student will engage in reflection on progress all year

Collaboration with team to determine how practice for SD goals will be embedded within activities, routines, transitions, etc

Throughout the year:

Practice for SD goals embedded within activities, routines, transitions, etc, with progress monitoring systems in place (data collection)

Student involved in self-evaluation and self-monitoring of progress in all areas. Systems for reflecting on progress

Student advocates for own accommodations

Student sets new goals and makes plans for how to accomplish them

What to do now:

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- ❑ Advocate for meaningful and rich communication supports
- ❑ Include students in IEPs (BEFORE age 14)
- ❑ Identify 1-2 self-determination skills to focus on now
- ❑ Embed practice on SD every day, in real situations
- ❑ Include students in all conversations that involve them
- ❑ Help families and students to meet/learn from adults with disabilities