SELF-DETERMINATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: LEARNING SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-ADVOCACY, CHOICE MAKING, AND GOAL SETTING

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Kaitlyn Coyne

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Date

Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

SELF-DETERMINATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: LEARNING SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-ADVOCACY, CHOICE MAKING, AND GOAL SETTING

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There is a lack of research demonstrating self-determination skills being taught at the elementary level. This pre-post design study examined the impact of implementing a self-determination curriculum unit to two groups of fourth graders, ages nine to eleven years old, who receive special education for various diagnoses, including specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, and autism. Eleven students learned about self-determination (i.e. self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting) through 28 lessons which included the use of role playing, hands-on activities, and literature. All participants, students, their parents, and their teachers, completed the AIR Self-Determination Scale before and after the curriculum intervention. Researcher reflection notes, student responses to post-intervention motivation scales, responses to research supplemental questions on pre- and post-surveys from parents and teachers were additional data sources. The findings indicate that overall, there were examples of growth in students’ self-determined behaviors. In particular, the capacity scores from the AIR measure showed an increase in perceptions of students’ self-determination skills, based on parent and teacher surveys. In
discussions during the unit lessons, all students were able to articulate their goals and recognize the meaning of key self-determination terms in various aspects of the curriculum. Recommendations for practice include implementing the curriculum unit with a larger number of students, including students in general education and those with more significant disabilities. Further research should be conducted to identify more long term effects of elementary-level self-determination curriculum for students with disabilities.

_______________________
, Committee Chair
Jean Gonsier-Gerdin, Ph.D.

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Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Self-determination is a broad concept with different meanings to different people. Cho, Wehmeyer and Kingston (2013) defined self-determination as “volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one’s life and to maintain or improve one’s quality of life” (p. 771) which include the subcategories of autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. In simpler terms, self-determination encompasses an individual’s ability to make choices, regulate him or herself, and have goal-directed behaviors without input from others (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Hart & Brehm, 2013). More specifically, characteristics of self-determination include: awareness of one’s strengths and limitations, differentiating between one’s wants and needs; making choices; considering options and anticipating consequences of decisions; taking action when appropriate; setting goals and working towards them; using problem-solving skills; striving for independence and being an advocate for oneself; regulating one’s own behavior; having self-confidence and motivation; and being responsible for oneself (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998; University of Minnesota, 1994). Regardless of the exact definition, teaching self-determination skills in school settings is an effective way to promote life skills, and a vital part of academic success for all students (Stang, Carter, Lane & Pierson, 2009).

Students who are self-determined have positive in-school and post-secondary outcomes, including increased academic performance, greater class participation, more post-secondary involvement in extra-curricular activities, improved status of
employment, more independence, and an enhanced quality of life (Stang, Carter, Lane & Pierson, 2009). For students with disabilities, self-determination creates opportunities to practice and acquire knowledge and skills that will enhance their daily lives, in addition to developing motivation to be successful (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Stang, Carter, Lane & Pierson, 2009). To achieve self-determination one must be instructed in the necessary skills, have the capacity to learn from given opportunities, and apply choice making specific to their own interests and needs (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2012). Through these opportunities for self-determination, students are able to understand and approve of themselves. This develops a positive sense of self and helps later in life with adjusting to new environments. In short, self-determination skills give individuals, especially students with disabilities, more control in their lives and increases self-esteem and self-concept (Campbell-Whatley, 2008).

Historically, individuals with disabilities often viewed with pity or even fear and not surprisingly, the idea of teaching self-determination for this population was not a priority (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998). A negative perception of disability continues today, and without well developed self-determination skills, individuals actually may try to hide their disability to avoid stigma (Hoffman, 2003). Consequently, students with disabilities may need to work harder than their peers without disabilities to create a positive self-concept. They may also require the support of their teachers to discover their strengths and gain awareness about their capabilities as well as understand their individual needs. Without this support, students with disabilities may struggle to learn to set goals, regulate themselves, and be confident with their decisions,
as they may not understand what they are capable of accomplishing. Direct instruction for self-determination skills, as well as their daily academics, can create an encouraging environment and guide students towards their goals, which in turn supports their being in control of their own lives (Campbell-Whatley, 2008).

As a self-determined individual learns to gain more control in his/her daily life, he/she may become internally motivated to pursue goals. In other words, the individual does things for him/herself without influence from an external pressure or reward system because it is enjoyable and/or worth the effort and a desired goal is achievable (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Students with disabilities not only need to learn the skills of self-regulation, goal setting, problem solving, etc., they also need to be motivated to persevere because, as adults, they will not be likely to have external motivators to encourage them to reach goals or complete tasks. Acquiring these skill sets in elementary school may help students become more independent and more likely to have positive long-term outcomes (e.g. employment, post-secondary schooling, etc.) (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Hart & Brehm, 2013).

No federal law mandates the teaching of self-determination in schools; however, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001\(^1\) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) are examples of legislation that mandate access to general education for all students. These laws emphasize holding all students accountable for achieving in all academic areas, regardless of disability. Research has

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\(^1\) Throughout the process of this research, NCLB was the legislation in place. NCLB was reauthorized in November 2015 and is now called Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This new law and its regulations are not reflected in this research.
revealed that students can use self-determination skills to reach these academic outcomes; therefore, teaching self-determination skills is important to incorporate into curriculum for students with and without disabilities (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2011; 2012; 2013). In other words, promoting self-determination skills can help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum through the development of strategies for learning, test-taking, organization, and self-regulation. Some of these key self-determination skills are problem solving, goal setting, and decision making, which are also skills all aligned with the state standards. Moreover, students who are self-determined can direct their own learning and reduce challenging behaviors, such as being off-task, thereby further breaking down barriers to accessing the general education curriculum (Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, & Little, 2008).

With the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, access to general education curriculum became a requirement to be explicitly stated in a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Specifically, how much of the general education setting and curriculum that the student is accessing and what supports, modifications, supplementary aids, and services that he/she needs to ensure the access to the general education curriculum must be included in the IEP (Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, & Little, 2008). Furthermore, the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA expanded these mandates to state that the IEP team must include someone knowledgeable about the general education curriculum and that a student cannot be removed from the general education setting because of a need to modify the curriculum (Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, & Little, 2008). These requirements are important because all students with disabilities, regardless of severity of
their disability, should be educated in the general education classroom in the least restrictive environment and therefore, should learn self-determination skills to ensure they get what they need. Students should be learning about their accommodations and modifications, as well as how to self advocate to guarantee they are getting their needs met in the general education setting.

Similarly, self-determination should be incorporated into daily lessons, starting as early as elementary school (Hoffman, 2003; Stang, Carter, Lane & Pierson, 2009). Doing so is possible when educators are able to connect self-determination skills to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS is a state-led initiative, related to the goals of NCLB and IDEA, which establish state standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in both English-language arts and mathematics. The ultimate goal of the CCSS is to prepare all students for college or the workforce (Rowe, Mazzotti, & Sinclair, 2015). This goal came from the concern that the United States is falling academically behind other top-performing international countries, and from the need to increase our rigor of education, to close the gap between K-12 education and college and career readiness (Konrad et al., 2014). Konrad et al. (2014) stated that even with this clearly stated intent, the CCSS standards do not inform educators about how to teach. Teachers need to begin using assessment data to focus instruction rather than simply assessing learning after the fact as a requirement. More specifically, students with disabilities need extra support from a collaborative team to meet their IEP goals, in addition to meeting the more rigorous academic standards. Educators need to create clear targets for students so they are able to understand what is expected of them in order to perform the task, as well as
self-monitor their progress (Konrad et al., 2014). This self-monitoring strategy is a strong starting point for teaching self-determination for students of all ages, not just high schoolers, and directly involves the student in his or her own learning, which is an integral part of learning self-determination.

Embedding teaching of self-determination skills within the teaching of academic skills could help prepare students with disabilities for district and state annual assessments, as mandated by NCLB, as well as prepare them with necessary life skills (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2013). As legislation no longer lets students with disabilities “opt out” of annual state assessments, special educators need to meet all their students’ needs. Educators may use a self-determination curriculum that also includes reading instruction, or teach strategies such as self-regulation, goal setting, and problem solving to help students reach academic goals and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS); ultimately meeting their students’ needs while complying with the law (Konrad, Fowler, Walker, Test, & Wood, 2007). The self-determination strategies and skills can be learned and in turn promote more access to curriculum for students with and without disabilities without needing additional curriculum or blocks of time in the day to teach it. In fact, teaching students to advocate for their needs (accommodations, asking for help, etc.), problem-solve, or set goals can be incorporated into daily lessons and activities in any classroom (Konrad, Fowler, Walker, Test, & Wood, 2007).

The structure of a self-determination curriculum may be the support that students with disabilities need to access CCSS and help develop self-determination skills over time. Overall, a self-determination curriculum at the elementary, middle or high school
level can be used in conjunction with general education instruction to promote access and mastery of CCSS as well as develop connections between the standards and self-determination skills (Bohanon, Castillo, & Afton, 2015). Some of the Common Core State Standards focus on processes and general proficiencies which require the application of self-determination skills. For example, the standards for mathematical practice include perseverance through problem-solving and use of tools strategically (Standards for Mathematical Practice, 2016). Self-determination skills can be used in any or all lessons throughout the day to not only connect to CCSS and the general education curriculum, but also support life-long outcomes for students (Rowe, Mazzotti, & Sinclair, 2015).

**Background of the Problem**

According to the American Psychological Association (2004), the development of self-determination skills for students in elementary school through college enhance learning and improve post-secondary outcomes (Hart & Brehm, 2013). Self-determination theory states that a student doing something for themselves creates intrinsic motivation, and if students are involved in setting their educational goals, they are more likely to reach those goals, including students with disabilities. Hart and Brehm (2013) also showed that students who are more self-determined are more likely to be successful after high school in terms of employment and living independently. There are many positive effects of learning self-determination in school, but this type of learning has clashed with the nation’s practice of high-stakes testing (American Psychological Association, 2004).
With the implementation of more rigorous state standards, the assessment to measure learning has also become more rigorous. High-stakes testing, as stated in NCLB 2001, has changed teaching in a way that promotes focusing on what will be on the test only, as opposed to teaching skills that students need to be successful for college and career readiness (Erskine, 2014). The commonly used term “teaching to the test” describes this change in the focus of teaching. The pressure from “teaching to the test” comes from the required standardized testing, where specific scores are needed to meet standards. These scores dictate whether schools remain open or become more closely monitored by the government. The required test scores may also lead to the use of narrowed curriculum choices and even scripted curriculum (Erskine, 2014). Teachers appear to have little to no control over curriculum choices and are responsible for all of their students to perform well on the assessments, which puts additional pressure on teachers (Erskine, 2014). This pressure further limits opportunities for teaching self-determination skills as the teachers are still adjusting to the new standards rather than educating themselves on teaching self-determination strategies for their students.

In addition to feeling the need to “teach to the test,” many educators at the elementary level do not teach self-determination skills or lessons in their classroom due to a lack of understanding, resources (e.g. curriculum), and time to do so (Cho, Wehmeyer, & Kingston, 2011). A large underlying issue is that elementary teachers do not receive sufficient professional development to have the knowledge and skills to implement effective self-determination programs in their classroom (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2011; 2012). Other common barriers include a lack of time to teach when
scripted curriculum are encouraged in schools to pass the high stakes tests (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2011). Educators need to understand the importance of teaching life skills such as self-determination from an early age, and the impact one teacher can have on a child, especially a student with special needs who may need additional support to learn to advocate for his/her rights to receive accommodations, etc. By learning basic self-determination skills in elementary schools, students may be more motivated and confident as they move forward in school.

Even though self-determination skills are not routinely taught at the elementary level, this does not mean these skills are not taught at any level. As IDEA 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) requires transition-planning starting in high school, secondary teachers are more inclined to include teaching self-determination skills in their lessons regularly, as it is seen as best practice to do so (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, & Soukup, 2013). A student’s IEP team, beginning no later than the age of 16, develops transition goals that are focusing on post-secondary outcomes including employment and independent living. In order to achieve these goals, students must learn how to have their needs met, set realistic goals to work towards, problem-solve real life situations, and complete tasks independently (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, & Soukup, 2013). Students must be taught these self-determination skills, as well as practice them, to achieve their transition goals. While no two high school special educators will teach self-determination skills the same way, the commonality is that there is a priority to teach their students these skills.
Lack of Teaching Self-Determination Skills in Elementary School

The teaching of self-determination skills is not seen as often as it should in educational settings, but is seen the least at the elementary level (Hart & Brehm, 2013). However, there is increasing concern that poor post-secondary outcomes of students with disabilities may be due to the limited exposure to self-determination skills until high school (Cho, Wehmeyer, & Kingston, 2011). Research also indicates that that secondary teachers find self-determination to be more important to teach than elementary teachers do and elementary teachers do not see their role in promoting these skills to students with disabilities (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2011). One reason contributing to less strategies to promote self-determination occurring at the elementary level is the fact that the law does not mandate transition planning until a specific age in high school. Also, limited curricular materials are available to teach self-determination skills to younger students (Hart & Brehm, 2013). Paradoxically, if students do not learn self-determination skills, it may be harder for them to be involved in the transition and IEP process. Even with multiple sources of research stating the importance of self-determination at all grade levels, including elementary, it is not mandated resulting in the focus to be on other educational areas that are required.

Hart and Brehm (2013) assert that teaching self-determination skills at the elementary level may be even more important than previously believed as students with disabilities are increasingly receiving special education services within inclusive school environments. Consequently, it may be harder for special education teachers to make appropriate accommodations for their students with IEPs, as students are often learning in
multiple general education environments. General education teachers may not be aware that they may be inhibiting their students, such as doing things for students with disabilities and restricting independence in the general education setting. Due to this model, these students may benefit from having the skills to communicate with their teachers in the general education setting and advocate for their needs and therefore, need direct instruction to learn these skills (Hart & Brehm, 2013).

**Importance of Specific Self-Determination Skills**

There are many aspects to self-determination that are important including: awareness of strengths and limitations; differentiating between wants and needs; making choices; considering options and anticipating consequences of decisions; taking action when appropriate; setting goals and working towards them; using problem-solving skills; striving for independence and being an advocate for oneself; regulating one’s own behavior; having self-confidence and motivation; and being responsible for oneself (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998; University of Minnesota, 1994).

Endless lessons, discussions, and opportunities for students of all abilities to learn and practice these aspects of self-determination can be created, but at the elementary level it needs to start at a simpler, foundational level in order to start instilling these concepts and skills in their lives.

Four areas within self-determination (self-awareness, self-advocacy, goal setting, and choice making) are an important focus, specifically for elementary students, because they serve as the foundation for more difficult skills, such as problem solving and self-monitoring, to be learned later in their educational careers. Self-awareness is a great
starting point for elementary-aged students because they are still learning who they are and what they like, and being able to discover this through the lens of self-determination can make it more meaningful and lasting. Self-advocacy is also important because adults sometimes overlook children’s opinions and needs, so students may require skills to stand up for themselves when they have an opinion, something to share, or something they need. Students need to be aware and assess his/her needs, strengths, and preferences, as well as make effective choices to advocate for these needs across settings (Hoffman, 2003). Choice making is a daily action of all people, but elementary students need to learn the importance of it and how to make more choices as they grow up because their parents will not always being making choices for them. Lastly, goal setting is something that students can learn to do at all levels, from something as simple as being able to count to 10 to raising their math grade from a C to an A. Learning to set goals is important for these students because it expands their skills further by having them look ahead and strive to reach something that may be difficult for them. All of these skills need to be taught and practiced over time for mastery to be achieved. A more detailed description of the importance of self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting will be introduced in Chapter 2.

Teaching self-determination skills is important and working with students with learning disabilities means finding new ways to teach material and skills that the students are lacking. These students are primarily educated in the general education setting and expected to be a part of grade level tasks. In the learning center, a special education service for students with deficits in reading, writing and math, the current researcher has
observed that many students do not have coping skills (e.g. cry when frustrated, punch the table when upset, etc.) or the advocacy skills to ask for what they need, and often do not even know what they need. These students need to be taught skills directly to learn what they need and why, which may also build their confidence and create motivation in school because of successes that they achieve setting goals or advocating for their needs. If students with disabilities learn self-awareness of their strengths and needs, then they can advocate when they need something to be successful in school. This skill set includes using choice making skills to decide when to advocate as well as being more decisive and not always relying on adults to tell them what comes next or exactly what to do. Elementary students with learning disabilities are capable and need direct instruction at their level, not through a high school curriculum, to learn self-determination skills.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

The concept of self-determination and its importance in a child’s education has been extensively studied in various forms, but there is a lack of research regarding implementation of self-determination curriculum at the elementary level. There is also a lack of self-determination curriculum that aligns with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). There is a need to inform educators, especially elementary teachers, about self-determination skills and its importance for students. In addition, teachers need to have easy-to-use activities and lessons to teach self-determination skills to their elementary students with and without disabilities. It is necessary to further examine teaching self-determination skills earlier to students with disabilities.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current research study was to explore the implementation of a self-determination curriculum, developed by the current author, in the resource/learning center setting that focuses on the self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills of fourth grade students with disabilities. The research question was: What is the impact of the implementation of structured self-determination activities on perceptions of self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills of students with disabilities, as measured by parents, teachers, and the students themselves, as well as on the students’ possible motivation in school? The data was collected using the AIR Self-Determination scales that were completed by the student, their parent, and their general education teacher before and after implementation of curriculum. In addition to the scale, supplemental questions were completed by parents and teachers. A motivation scale was completed by the students after the self-determination unit and researcher reflection notes were recorded throughout the study. The 11 fourth grade participants were in two groups, Group AB and Group CD, based on the school’s track system, to ensure consistent implementation of the curriculum. Outcomes of the study can be used to recommend to educators the implementation of self-determination activities/curriculum for students with disabilities in elementary settings in order to teach life skills that will support them as they progress in school.

Theoretical Framework

There are many general theories behind self-determination that support the purpose of teaching it to students with a variety of disabilities. The idea of self-
determination is to be aware of oneself as a learner, learn about one’s strengths and weaknesses, and how to help oneself after knowing these things (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998). Specifically, the four self-determination skills addressed in this study are self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting. The curriculum developed to teach these skills was informed by the following theories: 1) Albert Bandura’s theory of social learning, 2) Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, 3) Edwin Locke and Gary Latham’s theory of goal setting, and 4) the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction.

Albert Bandura’s theory of social learning is a relevant framework for teaching self-determination, as peers are important for socialization at the elementary level in daily learning environments. Even though Bandura’s research is from the 1970s-1980s, it continues to be used today to describe how new behaviors are learned by children (DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002). Bandura (1971) described social learning theory as a system where people learn new behaviors by watching the behavior of others or directly experiencing the behavior. The reason people learn through others’ experiences is due to learning from the end result of their actions. When a person exhibits a behavior, there is either a negative or positive consequence that occurs afterwards; this is when the individual watching can learn if the behavior is something they want to repeat or not, depending on consequences experienced (Bandura, 1971). For example, the students can observe peers in their classes advocating for what they need and seeing the positive consequence of receiving it. Students can also observe peers making choices at recess to learn the negative consequences of bullying or not sharing. Being able to practice self-
determination skills in a safe classroom setting, where the students can role-play scenarios, can help them see these positive and negative consequences with peers. In terms of self-determination at the elementary level, children can learn that they can be successful and may become motivated to utilize self-determination skills such as, self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting.

Howard Gardner (1995) connects the idea of self-determination and various learning styles through his theory of multiple intelligences. He asserts that every individual has unique strengths and areas of need as well as a unique way of analyzing the world in one or more of the eight types of intelligences (Gardner, 1995). The eight intelligences are: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalist intelligence. Gardner stated that schools focus closely on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences, but there are six remaining intelligences that are equally as important. In society, doctors, lawyers, and engineers are viewed as skilled and important; yet, there are musicians, artists, naturalists, therapists, and designers that are just as skilled in their own ways (Armstrong, 2013). Best practices in teaching include using all of the intelligences to incorporate all students’ strengths and promote more awareness of individual strengths to in turn increase self-determination skills. Self-determination curriculum should also avoid only teaching to linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. It should include bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and spatial intelligences, by incorporating activities that teach through role-playing, hands-on activities such as art,
and interacting with peers and adults. By doing so, and giving students the opportunities to use these various methods to express what they are learning, teachers can help students learn self-awareness skills, as well as choice making skills.

Edwin Locke and Gary Latham (Locke & Latham, 1990) developed the theory of goal setting that states that creating conscious goals and taking action towards them affects the level of task performance, meaning the higher the goal, the higher level of performance is seen. This theory can extend further to mean that individuals who set these goals are more likely to be autonomous learners, or taking responsibility for their learning (Sullivan & Strode, 2010). Successful autonomous learners set goals to reach higher levels of achievement in their education, and more students who choose their own goals reach these high levels of achievement than those who do not (Moeller, Theiler & Wu, 2012). Directly related to self-determination theory, goal setting by a student can create more success for him or her in schools.

Finally, the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (Mithaug, Wehmeyer, Agran, Martin, & Palmer, 1998) is a teaching model that uses a self-regulated problem-solving system for people of all ages to use to make decisions. The steps include: 1) set a goal, 2) develop a plan, and 3) evaluate a plan or goal. These steps help individuals prioritize their needs and strive to accomplish something they are interested in. This model goes beyond basic choice making and goal setting because it puts the students in an active role which takes the individual from where they are to a place where they want to be (Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2002; Agran, Cavin, Wehmeyer, & Palmer, 2006; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000; Palmer, Wehmeyer,
Gipson, & Agran, 2004). In doing so, individuals are no longer “casual agents” (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000) in learning, meaning that students are involved in their learning through a student-directed strategy and learning model. Students learn decision-making and self-evaluation skills as well as how to perform individually on an action plan and how to make adjustments, both academically and within community living and life skill situations (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000). This model has shown to support growth in students in many settings (e.g. special education and general education classroom settings in elementary, middle, and high schools) with various problems and goal setting scenarios (e.g. increased participation, appropriate social behaviors, etc.).

The application of Bandura’s theory of social learning will be applied when the fourth grade students in this study role-play scenarios experienced by peers in the reading group to understand if the end results had a positive or negative consequence. This strategy will be used in lessons where students share personal experiences to practice problem solving, the group will discuss possible consequences and solutions after role-playing the scenario. The Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction provides a format for the students to set a goal and plan how to meet it, primarily a focus during the “goal setting” section of the unit.

Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences will be incorporated throughout daily lessons by using drawing, art projects, role-playing, group discussions, visuals of concepts, and movement during instruction to create optimal learning for all learners. Lastly, Locke and Latham’s theory of goal setting will be used in the last portion of the
curriculum, as the focus is on goal-setting. Students will be setting personal goals for home and school and creating steps to reach them, with the hopes of encouraging them to be autonomous learners and to be motivated to work towards these goals and experience success.

Assumptions

Key assumptions are that the self-determination curriculum unit will have an impact on perceptions of students’ behaviors, that the curriculum unit was implemented with fidelity, and that the students are in need of this intervention. Other assumptions are that the multiple measures utilized are valid and the data were collected reliably. Also, it is assumed that there was fidelity and consistency of lessons implementation for the two groups since the same teacher implemented the lessons for each group.

Justifications

As previously mentioned, the research base is extensive on the importance of teaching self-determination skills for students with special needs, but there is a lack of research on teaching elementary schools to increase the students’ self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills. This research study could provide more information on the outcomes of implementing self-determination curriculum in the elementary setting, specifically focused on students with special needs, such as learning disabilities, autism, and other health impairments. The results of this study will be shared with the school site and other educators within the district.

Self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting are the focus of this study because they are interrelated, connect to the CCSS standards, and are the basics
of self-determination for elementary students. Students in late elementary school are at an age where they can understand with more ease what their disability is and learn how to persevere with it in school, if they are taught about it and their learning style (i.e. self-awareness). These students can also learn how to ask for what they need to be successful, such as more time or assistance with assignments as needed (i.e. self-advocacy). Students at this age with disabilities also need to learn how to make decisions that affect their lives instead of having someone else always decide things for them (i.e. choice making), and then set goals to push themselves, even if it is as simple as learning math facts or getting a B on a test (i.e. goal setting). Learning these skills at a young age could act as building blocks to continue strengthening these skills and add the rest of the components of self-determination (i.e. self-regulation, goal-directed behaviors without input from others, differentiating between wants and needs, anticipating consequences of decisions, problem-solving skills, etc.) (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Hart & Brehm, 2013) as the student grows up and begins transition planning for his or her future beyond school.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the small number of participants and single school site used. One may assume that the results from a larger number of participants would be more meaningful and possibly lead to further research on self-determination instruction at the elementary level. The findings may show a trend where self-determination lessons increases or decreases the students’ self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making or goal setting skills, but regardless of the results, they cannot be generalized to a greater
population. The research design also limits implications of results as there is no control group to compare the results with and only one teacher is implementing the lessons. Lastly, the survey results were based on self-report, and there is no way to tell if the questions were answered truthfully, as no observation sessions occurred to see if self-determination skills were being demonstrated in the classroom or at home.

**Definition of Terms**

*Autism*

A student with autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as written in IDEA 2004 under the thirteen categories of disability, has a developmental disability affecting communication and social interaction, general before the age of three, that adversely affects the student’s educational performance. Other characteristics often included in the autism diagnosis are repetitive activities/movements, resistance to daily routine or environmental changes, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (IDEA – Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004, n.d.).

*Choice making*

Choice making, a component of self-determination, is simply an individual making decisions in his or her daily life. Individuals who are given choices and pick which option they want feel more empowered and motivated because they are in control. According to Brooks and Young (2011), students who are offered choices in their classroom feel more self-determined and are intrinsically motivated to participate in the classroom activities.
Goal setting

Goal setting is another form of motivation and a component of self-determination. When an individual sets a goal, he or she is consciously creating goals to improve his or her learning/performance (Sullivan & Strode, 2010). Goal setting in terms of education specifically requires setting clear and doable targets for learning.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

A written plan that provides educational services for a student with one of the thirteen qualifying disabilities. The document contains a Free and Appropriate Public Education setting as indicated in IDEA. IDEA also requires that an IEP meeting be conducted at minimum of once per year; a triennial evaluation must be conducted every three years. The central IEP team members consist of a parent or legal guardian, general education teacher, special education teacher, and administrator. Other members may include designated service providers (DIS services), such as a speech and language pathologist, occupational or physical therapists, inclusion specialists, school nurse, adaptive physical education teacher, etc. (IDEA, 2004).

Learning Center/Resource Program

A special education classroom where students receive specialized academic instruction for a certain percentage of their day, based on their IEP. Services are often received in a separate classroom, but push-in support can also be provided in the general education classroom setting. Typical support given is in reading, writing, and math instruction.
Motivation

Motivation is defined as a connection between thought and action that relates to why behavior starts, persists, and/or stops based on choices made. Individuals can either be internally or externally motivated, but regardless, a person is motivated to complete a task when he or she feels likely to accomplish it (Sullivan & Strode, 2010). This is also true in education, where a student’s motivation affects his or her learning, whether he or she intrinsically wants to complete the task or is extrinsically motivated by a reward. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated are more self-determined, and those who are extrinsically motivated need more external support to become self-determined (Brooks & Young, 2011). Once a student is motivated to do a task, he or she is more likely to reach their goal and be successful, regardless of difficulty (Sullivan & Strode, 2010).

Other Health Impairment

A student with the diagnosis of other health impairment, as written in IDEA 2004 under the thirteen categories of disability, has a limited strength due to a chronic or acute health problem (e.g. diabetes, Tourette syndrome, sickle cell anemia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, etc.) that adversely affects the student’s educational performance (IDEA – Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004, n.d.).

Paraeducator

A paraeducator, as known as paraprofessional or instructional assistant, is an individual who supports in special education services. The paraeducator may be assigned to a specific classroom to support student needs, such as a learning center or special day
class, or may be a one-on-one support to a specific child with special needs. Paraeducators are supervised by a credentialed special education teacher.

**Self-advocacy**

Self-advocacy is also a component within self-determination. Pennell (2001) defined self-advocacy as standing up for yourself, by speaking out, as well as knowing your rights, being empowered, making choices that you want to make in your life, and accepting the consequences. Self-advocacy can also be seen as a learning process, in which you learn from experience and mistakes throughout your lifetime (Pennell, 2001).

**Self-awareness**

Self-awareness is another component of self-determination and is defined as seeing oneself as an individual entity and being aware of personal traits, feelings, and behaviors. Self-awareness is not something you are born with, but develops over time, and continues to grow and change as the individual grows and changes in various settings and situations (Cherry, n.d.). In terms of education, this translates to mean that an individual is aware of his or her learning styles and disability, as well as how he or she feels and behaves with that knowledge.

**Self-determination**

Self-determination is defined as understanding one’s strengths and weaknesses as a form of self-awareness, in addition to having a combination of skills, beliefs, and knowledge that enable an individual to use self-regulated and goal-directed behavior (Hoffman, 2003). In addition to setting goals and self-regulation, self-determination includes making choices and decisions in one’s life, free from outside influence. Specific
examples within self-determination include, but are not limited to: awareness of personal preferences, ability to make choices based on preferences, decision making when given multiple options, ability to take initiative when needed, set and work towards goals, problem-solving skills, striving for independence, self-advocacy skills, persistence, communication skills, and assuming responsibility for one’s actions (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998).

**Specific Learning Disability**

A student with a specific learning disability, as written in IDEA 2004 under the thirteen categories of disability, has one or more basic psychological processing disorders (e.g. auditory, visual, attention, phonological processing) that impact the ability to listen, speak, think, read, spell, write, or do math calculations (IDEA – Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004, n.d.).

**Speech and Language Impairment**

A student with a speech and language impairment, as written in IDEA 2004 under the thirteen categories of disability, has a communication disorder that affects their educational performance, such as stuttering or language, articulation, or voice impairments (IDEA – Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004, n.d.).

**Organization of the Remainder of Thesis**

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. Chapter two reviews the literature regarding educators’ perspectives of self-determination, as well as the key components of teaching self-determination. It also examines the relationship between motivation and goal setting and studies that have implemented self-determination
programs and practices. Chapter three describes the methods used in this study, including the descriptions of the participants, development of the curriculum and procedures, the data collection methods, and data reduction and analysis. Chapter four provides detailed descriptions of the findings from the study with a focus on individual student data. Chapter five discusses the findings in connection to the current research literature, the reflections from the implementation of the self-determination curriculum unit, and recommendations for future practice and research. The appendices at the end of this thesis include the consent forms, the self-determination curriculum and lesson plan outlines and references, and the data collection tools used.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines: 1) the perspectives of educators regarding the importance of and barriers to teaching self-determination skills; 2) the key components of teaching self-determination; 3) the relationship between motivation and self-determination; and 4) the implementation of programs and practices to teach self-determination skills in varying settings. The studies reviewed the span across all age groups, ranging from elementary school to high school, in general and special education settings. Each study covers various parts of self-determination, with some focusing on only one or two aspects. Several studies have been conducted to show the importance of self-determination skills for all students, at all ages and at all levels of schooling, with varying levels of ability. This current research is being reviewed to inform the current study.

Educators’ Perspectives of Self-Determination

Teachers’ Perspectives on Teaching Self-Determination

Factors that have been explored in the research are teacher’s views on self-determination as an important concept and their perceptions of barriers to teaching self-determination. Not having experience with or an understanding of the concepts of self-determination can be a barrier to promoting self-determination skills in the classroom. Stang, Carter, Lane, and Pierson (2009) studied general and special education teachers’ perspectives on teaching self-determination in their classrooms. Using a rating scale, over 800 elementary and middle school teachers were surveyed about providing self-
determination skills instruction and how much they valued the concept of self-determination, including choice making, problem solving, decision making, goal setting, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Overall, the teachers as a group rated the importance of these skill sets to be in the moderate to high range, but only reported teaching problem solving and self-regulation regularly in their classrooms. Self-advocacy and self-awareness were taught less often. The data show that there is a lack of teaching self-determination skills in the classroom. In their discussion of the findings the authors (Stang, Carter, Lane, & Pierson, 2009) noted that implementing the skills earlier in schooling may connect later on to transition planning at the high school level.

In another study, Cho, Wehmeyer, and Kingston (2013) surveyed over 400 general and special education teachers about the value of self-determination skills, with a focus on goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction, self-reinforcement, self-evaluation, and self-scheduling, and of students’ learning about their disability categories, as well as how frequently the skills were taught. The researchers found that educators who taught self-evaluation see more importance in teaching self-determination overall, but the other skills did not have the same results. In addition, the teachers who incorporate all of the strategies, excluding self-scheduling, more frequently teach self-determination skills (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2013).

**Teachers’ Perspectives on Barriers to Teaching Self-Determination**

There are documented barriers that deter educators from teaching the self-determination skills. Educators report that the most common barriers are insufficient information and/or professional development about self-determination, a perceived lack
of time to teach these self-determination skills, and limited access or knowledge about available published curriculum to use to teach self-determination (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2012). These barriers may discourage teachers from pursuing self-determination curriculum or incorporating teaching of self-determination into daily teaching.

Cho, Wehmeyer, and Kingston (2011) conducted a study regarding elementary teachers’ perspectives on barriers and interventions for self-determination while comparing responses between general and special educators. Four hundred kindergarten through sixth grade teachers were surveyed across thirty states. The findings revealed that special educators were more familiar with teaching self-determination skills, but both groups found the concept of self-determination to be important. Both special and general educators also spend the same amount of time teaching self-determination. The most significant barrier the educators recognized for teaching self-determination was the perception that students have more urgent needs that need to be met first, such as learning to read and write. Another barrier defined was insufficient time in the school day (Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2011). Cho, Wehmeyer, and Kingston (2012) conducted another study with over 200 elementary special educators focusing on how teaching self-regulation strategies affected perceptions of self-determination, as well as on their frequency of teaching the skills and related barriers. The data showed that the educators found the importance of teaching self-determination skills to be high, and over half of the teachers taught all of the skill sets. The barriers reported in this study aligned those of
their previous study, including a lack of knowledge and time in the classroom to teach self-determination skills (Cho, Wehmeyer, & Kingston, 2011; 2012).

**Teachers’ Perspectives on Students’ Understanding of Their Disability**

A similar study had a teacher survey focused on perceptions of their students’ understanding their own disability, (i.e. self-awareness, which is a component of self-determination) and what the teachers do to help their students develop this self-awareness. Abernathy and Taylor (2009) used data from a focus group of five special educators to create their survey. One hundred surveys were mailed, and thirty upper elementary and middle school special educators completed the survey by rating what and how they instruct their students in terms of self-determination. The results revealed that the educators did teach these self-determination skills, to elementary and middle school students rather than waiting until an older age to teach and they also promoted student-involvement in their IEP meeting. Students with more knowledge about their disability were able to participate more in the meeting. Also, the more common method used for teaching students about their learning disability was to discuss on the disability rather than act it out or using a hands-on method. In some instances, teachers said they would not even address the issue at all. The authors stated that there is still a high need for teacher preparation programs to better prepare educators how to talk to students about their disability (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009).

**Paraeducators’ Perspectives on Self-Determination**

From another point of view, this study investigated perspectives of self-determination addressing the perceptions of paraeducator understanding of and
involvement in teaching self-determination. Carter, Sisco, and Lane (2011) surveyed over 300 paraeducators, from elementary through high school settings working with students with low-incidence disabilities, about the seven self-determination domains (choice making, decision-making, goal setting, problem-solving, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-regulation skills) and their familiarity with the self-determination strategies in relation to supporting their students. Paraeducators ranked these self-determination skills from highest to lowest importance. The data showed that paraeducators overall held high importance for all domains in self-determination, with choice making and problem solving as the most important. Only occasionally did paraeducators teach choice making and problem solving skills, with choice making as the most common to be taught. Additionally, secondary paraeducators viewed self-determination skills as more valuable for students than elementary paraeducators did, and the paraeducators in a general education setting taught less self-determination skills than those in special education settings (Carter, Sisco & Lane, 2011).

Lane, Carter, and Sisco (2012) conducted another study involving paraeducators, but this time focusing on those who work with students who have high-incidence disabilities, including learning disabilities, autism, and speech and language impairments. These authors surveyed over 200 paraeducators from both general and special education settings from elementary to high school, who were asked to rank the self-determination skills from highest to lowest importance. Similar to the previous study, these paraeducators also ranked the importance of all the self-determination domains as high, with choice making, decision-making, problem solving, and self-awareness as having the
highest importance. Paraeducators also reported teaching these skills occasionally, with problem solving as the most common to be taught. Goal setting was ranked the lowest in all categories; meaning that the participants do not see it as important as the other skills (Lane, Carter & Sisco, 2012). These two studies (Carter, Sisco & Lane, 2011; Lane, Carter & Sisco, 2012) show similarities in paraeducators’ perceptions of self-determination skills, regardless of high- or low-incidence disabilities.

Summary

Overall, the general consensus from teachers and paraeducators alike, is that self-determination is important for students with special education services and should be taught to all students at all grade levels. Teachers stated that they do not teach self-determination skills as much as they would like, as they view core subjects to be the critical focus given the amount of time they have to teach during the day. The most common self-determination skills valued by educators were problem solving and choice making (Carter, Sisco, & Lane, 2011; Lane, Carter, & Sisco, 2012), and one study suggested making improvements to teacher preparation programs so educators can be more prepared and knowledgeable about teaching self-determination (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009).

Key Components of Teaching Self-Determination

There are many components to self-determination as a concept and as an intervention, but four components may serve as the basis for teaching self-determination at the elementary level. These components, self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice
making, and goal setting, are most present in the current research and are skills that are needed by students of all ages.

**Self-awareness**

Hoffman (2003) explained that students with learning disabilities need to be aware of all of their choices to make an informed decision and need the opportunities to learn the skills for identifying options, acquiring information and resources, as well as practicing the skills and reflecting on the experiences. Educators and parents alike need to work with this population to create awareness of their disability and to create more effective choice and decision-making scenarios for them to participate in, such as their IEP meetings and setting goals for their learning. Specific programs that teach these skills of self-determination will help with their awareness (Hoffman, 2003). While having a heightened sense of self-awareness may create self-consciousness where a person feels insecure and judged, educators need to teach that being aware can create confidence because the individual has knowledge of him or herself that no one else can take from them (Cherry, n.d.). The importance of self-awareness for students with disabilities is to be aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and needs so they can learn how to advocate for themselves to be successful in life, regardless of what challenges they need to overcome.

**Self-advocacy**

Self-advocacy is defined as the ability to speak up for yourself, make personal decisions, and know your rights. Being a self-advocate leads to empowerment and continuing to be self-determined (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998). Because of the positive outcomes from self-advocacy, research shows that teaching self-
advocacy skills early in school will empower students of all abilities at earlier ages and increase their self-determination to lead to a brighter future (Hart & Brehm, 2013). Examples of self-advocacy and self-determination skills to develop in early to late elementary school include developing academic goals, planning how he or she will meet the goals during the school year, having a career aspiration, making simple choices about how to complete his or her work, looking back and discussing consequences of a situation based on the decision they made, and reflecting on goals or problem-solving situations (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998; Hart & Brehm, 2013). Self-advocacy is an important aspect of self-determination, especially for individuals with disabilities, as individuals learn to use their voice to speak their mind and not be taken advantage of. In terms of elementary school, students can advocate for themselves to receive their modifications and accommodations in the classroom and learn to ask for what they need to be successful.

**Choice making**

Hoffman (2003) stated that being able to make good choices is one of the most important things a student can do for themselves, especially those with learning disabilities, in order to be successful after high school. Choices need to be consistent with what is important to the individual in order to help him or her achieve better outcomes as an adult. To do so, the student needs to assess his or her strengths, weaknesses, preferences and needs through the following steps: 1) know yourself; 2) value yourself; 3) plan; 4) act; and 5) experience outcomes from making choices and learn about his or herself (Hoffman, 2003). At the elementary level and all the way up to
college-level courses, when students are given choices, they are motivated to complete their work because they made the decision to do it, as opposed to it being forced on them by the teacher (Brooks & Young, 2011).

**Goal setting**

Studies focusing on goal setting, related to self-determination, are limited in the field of education. Goal setting is related to being an autonomous learner; meaning that the student is taking responsibility for his/her learning. Effective autonomous learners set goals to reach higher levels of achievement in his/her education, and students who choose his/her own goals reach these high levels of achievement more than those who do not. Goal setting is also defined as a process of establishing a useable and clear objective for learning (Moeller, Theiler & Wu, 2012). Research on goal setting, in general, has shown that after setting a goal and receiving appropriate feedback from others, individuals increase his/her performance and have higher achievement, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Moeller, Theiler, & Wu, 2012). According to Edwin Locke and Gary Latham (1990), their goal setting theory makes higher goals more achievable as the individual focuses effort and attention on the goal-related activity, thereby, creating more persistence and motivation (Sullivan & Strode, 2010). Goal setting can be used in the classroom to motivate and focus students on their academic goals.

**Summary**

The key components of self-determination in the current study are: self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting. These skills were selected because these are areas that are accessible for elementary students at any level and are
building blocks for more advanced self-determination skills that can be taught as the students grow. Introducing students to their disability at a younger age (i.e. self-awareness) can help students be more involved in their education and be able to advocate for what they need (i.e. self-advocacy). Also, students who know what they need are more likely to make choices in their education and set goals to achieve higher standards and to meet their needs.

**The Relationship Between Motivation and Self-Determination**

Motivation is a large component to educational success and connected to self-determination because motivation often occurs and is demonstrated after students have developed self-determination skills. Brooks and Young (2011) described a connection between motivation and empowerment and the use of educational opportunities to develop and promote learned self-determination skills. Motivation is most commonly seen when an individual is self-determined and creates a feeling of personal control. Having choices in school activities, as a part of learning self-determination and choice making, also creates motivation to participate. These opportunities to make choices also develop persistence for students to complete tasks and take initiative in the future (Brooks & Young, 2011). Motivation is important in school because motivated students become more engaged in the curriculum and want to learn, rather than needing to be forced to learn.

According to Sullivan and Strode (2010), there is a continuum of motivation and self-determination. When someone is not self-determined, he or she has no motivation, or is not motivated. In the middle of the spectrum, a student may be learning some self-
determination skills but is still reliant on extrinsic motivation, where outside rewards and reinforcements create the motivation. Lastly, a self-determined child may be intrinsically motivated, by wanting to be successful for themselves (Sullivan & Strode, 2010).

In a study by Moeller, Theiler, and Wu (2012), high school students were studied to view a relationship between goal setting and student achievement over a five-year span. New participants were added each year to increase the sample size, and prior to the intervention, participants received training on goal setting and the self-regulation program used among learners. Within the program, the students created personalized goals and action plans, and reflected on their goal at the end of each chapter to see improvements. After analysis of the data, the researchers found that there was a steady increase over time for all three areas (setting goals, creating an action plan, and reflecting on goals) showing a relationship between goal setting and student attainment (Moeller, Theiler. & Wu, 2012).

**Implementation of Self-Determination Curriculum**

Current research has studied the use of a self-determination intervention with most age groups, including elementary, middle, and high school students. All of the studies include students with disabilities, but some studies also include general education students in their participant group. The intervention introduced varies between studies, from transition planning curriculum to whole-class instruction to increase self-determination skills, or even a learning model to promote goal-setting and achievement. The following overview of studies implementing programs and practice to teach self-determination skills was used to inform the current researcher’s study.
High School Implementation

Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, and Soukup (2013) conducted a five-year longitudinal study involving 371 high school students receiving special education services and 130 high school teachers. The purpose of the study was to see if interventions promoted self-determination and increased post-school outcomes, using an intervention group and control group that received a placebo intervention. Both the Arc’s Self-Determination Scale and AIR Self-Determination Scale were used to assess growth in skills over the course of three years; these scales are based on self-report. The focus of the self-determination interventions included the ChoiceMaker Curriculum (involving choosing goals and self-directed IEPs), Self-Advocacy Strategy (teaching students to make commitments, planning steps and rehearsing them with teacher feedback, and then transferring the skills to an actual meeting), Steps to Self-Determination (lessons focusing on attaining goals, self-advocacy, and decision making), Whose Future Is It Anyway? (specific lessons regarding disability awareness, decision making, finding and using community resources, writing transition goals, and becoming an effective team member), the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (students identify their problem, as well as possible solutions, barriers, and consequences), and the NEXT S.T.E.P. Curriculum (videos/materials used to motivate students for transition planning to develop self-awareness, goal setting, and putting a plan in place). These interventions were used with fidelity and delivered to individuals and/or groups based on student need. The researchers found that over time, students with exposure to the self-determination intervention showed growth in their demonstration of self-determined skills when
compared to the control group (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, & Soukup, 2013).

Shogren, Palmer, Wehmeyer, Williams-Diehm, and Little (2012) also conducted a study with high school students with disabilities with a focus using the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)*. The model is based on Wehmeyer’s elements of self-determination focusing on self-regulated problem solving and student-directed learning and was adapted from the adolescent version (Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003). The study included 312 participants for a two-year span focusing on self-determination, goal attainment, and access to general education curriculum. In the first year, the intervention group received SDLMI interventions and the control did not. In the second year, the intervention group continued to receive the intervention and the control group began to receive SDLMI. Special education teachers were recruited to teach the SDLMI model to their students following the three main goals of the model: set a goal, take action, and adjust goal/plan. The *Goal Attainment Scaling* measure was used for data collection to see how students were progressing on their goals. To measure access to the general education curriculum, a system called Access CISSAR (Access Version of the Code for Instructional Structure and Student Academic Response) measured when opportunities were available for students to access the curriculum through observation. The results indicated that students with intellectual disabilities had higher scores in transition goals whereas students with learning disabilities had higher scores in academic goals. In terms of access to general education curriculum, students from both disability categories increased over time (Shogren, Palmer, Wehmeyer, Williams-Diehm, & Little, 2012).
Middle School Implementation

A study by Campbell-Whatley (2008) actually implemented self-determination lessons in classrooms for middle school age students (i.e. grades five through nine) to see if students’ self-determination increased from these lessons taught in the resource room. The lesson format was as follows: goals and lesson objectives, assess student knowledge, role-play, generalize to other situations, evaluate, and test skill transfer. This format was used for each lesson. The topics included: what does it mean to have a learning disability?; successful people with learning disabilities; characteristics of learning disabilities; entering a special education program/IEP process; knowing my strengths and weaknesses; problem scenarios and self-advocacy; and strategies for handling anger. The students answered questions before the start of lessons and after their completion, using the Piers Harris Self-Concepts Scale to measure their growth. Overall, the results showed that there was a significant increase in students’ self-concept and self-esteem after the lessons were implemented (Campbell-Whatley, 2008).

Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Williams-Diehm, Davies, and Stock (2012) studied over 150 middle school students in special education with a specific deficit in reading and used the Whose Future Is It Anyway? (WFA) transition curriculum. The goal of the study was to use the WFA curriculum to promote self-determination skills in addition to increase in-school and post-secondary positive outcomes. More specifically, the researchers measured factors that influence and predict students’ self-determination knowledge using the Arc’s Self-Determination Scale and the AIR Self-Determination Scale. The data showed that overall knowledge about self-determination, self-efficacy,
and instructional factors predicted the students’ self-determination more than personal variables such as gender, age, and IQ. Ultimately, this study showed that the factors that promote self-determination are changeable and can be influenced by educators (Lee et al., 2012).

In another study, Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer, and Hughes (2002) explored the use of the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction to measure goal attainment with four middle school students in Utah who had the diagnosis of autism, intellectual disability, or multiple disabilities. The students worked on one or more IEP objectives when participating in the general education setting. All of the students, except one, were functioning at an elementary grade level. The students selected a target behavior to focus on as a goal in the general education setting. The behaviors included: appropriate touching, following directions, and participating more in class. To learn these skills, the students followed the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction to learn the self-regulated steps to problem solving: 1) set a goal, 2) take action, and 3) adjust goal or plan. The Goal Attainment Scale was used to measure growth towards the students’ goals. All students reached their goal with 100% accuracy, exceeding their set goals by 10-20%, after receiving the training and instruction from the SDLMI (Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer & Hughes, 2002).

Agran, Cavin, Wehmeyer, and Palmer (2006) also studied three middle school students with moderate to severe disabilities (i.e. autism or intellectual disabilities). The participants worked with the researcher to pick a specific curriculum area to focus on in this study. Prior to data collection, the students participated in a questioning process to
develop their goal. From their choice of curriculum area, the students chose a specific goal to work on and how they would measure the goal. The researchers used the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction as an intervention, where the participants were trained on the model prior to data collection. Students were given multiple opportunities to practice their skills with the instructor before attempting them on their own. Researchers observed students in the classroom for baseline and maintenance data. Students’ baseline skill mastery varied from 0% to 25% accuracy, and their maintenance was between 75% and 100% mastery. The self-monitoring, goal-setting, and self-instruction intervention strategies resulted in an increase in goal-related skills for all three participants (Agran, Cavin, Wehmeyer, & Palmer, 2006).

Finally, Palmer, Wehmeyer, Gipson, and Agran (2004) conducted a study with 22 middle and high school students (i.e., sixth to ninth graders) with intellectual and learning disabilities. Problem-solving skills were taught with the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction prior to the intervention. During phase 1, students in Group 1 received instruction in problem-solving skills based on a social studies or science standard, while Group 2 served as a control. The problem was “What is my goal?” In the second phase, Group 2 received instruction for goal-setting and planning skills in language arts, and Group 1 was the control group. The problem was “What is my plan?” In the final stage, the problem was “What have I learned?” and both groups participated. The Goal Attainment Scale and ARC Self-Determination Scale were used to measure growth and revealed that all students increased their use of self-determination skills and reached their goals (Palmer, Wehmeyer, Gipson, & Agran, 2004).
Elementary School Implementation

Palmer and Wehmeyer (2003) used the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction* or SDLMI, (Mithaug, Wehmeyer, Agran, Martin, & Palmer, 1998) as a way to structure the self-determination lessons used in their study. Fourteen teachers for kindergarten through third grades participated in the study to implement SDLMI in their classrooms. The students ranged from ages five to nine and most, but not all, students were receiving special education services. The students who were not currently receiving special education services were in the assessment process to determine eligibility to receive special education services or receiving additional support through a different reading or math enrichment service. Teachers were trained by the project staff in group and one-on-one settings and provided developmentally appropriate materials for the lessons, such as students completing worksheets for students to complete about their personal interests. Lessons were structured in three phases: 1) set a goal, 2) take action, and 3) adjust goal or plan. Students answered questions to direct their learning and the teacher supported them as needed. The results showed that the SDLMI model can be successful in the early elementary grades, meaning students as young as five years old can successfully set goals and work to obtain them with support from their teacher, whether the goals were academic, behavioral, or socially based (Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003). The research also demonstrated that self-determination skills can be taught to young children and help them be successful in school and life in various areas.

Murawski and Wilshinsky (2005) also introduced self-determination lessons into the elementary classroom in a unique fashion. A self-determination unit was taught in an
inclusive classroom of six-year-olds (first grade) using a simulated, desktop car in a “Drivers Training Program.” Students began by listing strengths and weaknesses/ “roadblocks,” and then learning about how the mind works. Next, a metaphor was presented comparing the mind to driving a car, so students could use this metaphor to learn how to be successful in school. The car had a visor with the daily goal written on it and a post-it with previous goals written based on their strengths and weaknesses. Students used a timer to regulate on-task behavior and tallied when they were successfully on-task. They also used a brad on their gauge to show whether they were making big or little progress. Lastly, the steering wheel was a reminder to complete their work, and a place to store finished work and keep hands still while listening. Good driver points were awarded for appropriate behavior and driver language (e.g. steering wheel, mirror, etc.) was used by staff to redirect students. The study’s findings of the curriculum revealed motivation by students to participate in the program, more positive student behavior in the classroom, an increase parent involvement, as well as an increase in self-awareness for the students. Overall, this research showed the value of teaching self-determination skills in early elementary school (Murawski & Wilshinsky, 2005).

Lastly, Merlone and Moran (2008) used a program called Building Awareness – Fifth Grade Smarts and Mel Levine’s model of management with their fifth grade students in a learning center setting to develop self-awareness and self-advocacy skills before their students’ transition to middle school. The points emphasized the program were: fifth grade students in the learning center can do fifth grade work; every mind has strengths; practicing a skill can strengthen it; and when one understands how one learns,
seeking help is easier. The students first learned about how their brain works including attention, memory, organization, and behavior, as well as how to persevere and advocate for themselves. Next, the students learned specifically about their disability and their education program, and about famous individuals with their disability and possible careers based on an interest survey. The researchers found that the students’ opinions changed about their disability, ultimately disregarding the belief that it would limit them from college or their choice career. Moreover, the students’ self-determination skill sets increased before moving on to middle school (Merlone & Moran, 2008).

**Summary**

The primary inconsistencies between studies regarding self-determination include the definition of self-determination and the skills that compare self-determination since it is a broad term with various aspects needing to be studied. Nevertheless, research demonstrates that all aspects of self-determination are considered important to the overarching theme of self-determination. The importance of teaching self-determination skills at the elementary level is also apparent from the literature, and the current study focuses on teaching fourth grade students with disabilities the basic concepts of self-determination through self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting.

Due to the limited resources for self-determination instruction at the elementary level, the current researcher created her own curriculum that uses reading-based strategies to teach students with disabilities about self-awareness, self-advocacy, goal-setting, and choice making focusing on the elementary level. A combination of children’s literature, character development curriculum (e.g. *What Do You Stand For?*), self-
determination/transition curriculum (e.g. the Bridge School Self-Determination curriculum and *Whose Future Is It Anyway?*), and the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction resources were used to create an elementary-level self-determination curriculum unit. These resources connect to elementary students because it is at their level and use scenarios to which they can relate. The curriculum still allows students to meet the CCSS and their IEP reading and writing goals. (See Appendix A for the actual curriculum used.)
Chapter 3

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to implement a self-determination curriculum unit and to measure the students’ individual growth in the areas of self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting. This research utilized a pre-post design, where the students, teachers, and parents took a survey prior to implementation of the curriculum unit and at the completion of the curriculum unit. The purpose of the survey was to measure the perceptions of students’ growth in relation to the self-determination concepts.

Setting and Participants

This study took place at a Title I elementary school in the greater Sacramento region during regular school hours (8:05 a.m. to 2:35 p.m.). The participants in this study consisted of 11 fourth grade students with IEPs for various disabilities (e.g. specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, and autism) who attend a learning center for specialized academic support and are in the general education setting the remainder of the day. Participants also included the student’s parents and their classroom teachers (See Table 1). This was a purposeful sample and the students were selected based on accessibility and parental consent, not based on their levels of functioning or current academic ability.

The participants were divided into two groups based on the year-round calendar at the school. Group AB consists of Track A and Track B students and Group CD consists of Track C and Track D students. Due to the school being year-round and on a track
system, the intervention was conducted and data were collected in two different time frames for these two groups. Group AB started the intervention on January 4\textsuperscript{th}, and ended on March 7\textsuperscript{th}. Group CD started on October 26\textsuperscript{th}, and ended on February 26\textsuperscript{th}, due to the fact that both tracks C and D had an extended break during the intervention stage and needed to be completed at separate times. Track C specifically went from October 26\textsuperscript{th} to December 16\textsuperscript{th} and resumed February 9\textsuperscript{th} until February 26\textsuperscript{th}. Track D occurred from October 26\textsuperscript{th} to December 16\textsuperscript{th} and January 4\textsuperscript{th} through the 25\textsuperscript{th}.

The researcher reviewed the method with all of the parents and provided them with a consent form (see Appendix B for consent form) allowing their child to participate in the study. A Spanish consent form was also provided for parents with limited English, and a Spanish translator assisted in explaining the process to them. The students were also guided through the methods of the research study and offered an assent form to sign.

Group AB consisted of two teachers and the five students who met from 9:35 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. four days a week. Jacob\textsuperscript{2} is a nine year old, Hispanic, male student in Mrs. Garrison’s class. He has a specific learning disability and speech and language impairment and comes to learning center for reading comprehension support. Jack is a ten year old, African-American, male student in Mrs. Garrison’s class. He has a specific learning disability and speech and language impairment and comes to learning center for reading and math support at two different times each day. Selena is an eleven year old, Hispanic, female student in Mrs. White’s class. She has a speech and language

\footnote{All names used, for students, parents, and teachers alike, are pseudonyms.}
### Table 1
**Student Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade / Track</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Mrs. Garrison</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>4th grade A</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>specific learning disability, speech and language impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Mrs. Garrison</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>4th grade A</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>specific learning disability, speech and language impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Mrs. White</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>4th grade B</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>specific learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darian</td>
<td>Mrs. White</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>4th grade B</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>autism, speech and language impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selena</td>
<td>Mrs. White</td>
<td>11 years old</td>
<td>4th grade B</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>speech and language impairment, other health impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Ms. Freeman</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>4th grade C</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>specific learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasha</td>
<td>Miss George/ Mrs. Finkle</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>4th grade D</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>specific learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larissa</td>
<td>Miss George/ Mrs. Finkle</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>4th grade D</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>specific learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Miss George/ Mrs. Finkle</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>4th grade D</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>specific learning disability, speech and language impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javi</td>
<td>Miss Desmon</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>4th grade D</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>autism, speech and language impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Miss Desmon</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>4th grade D</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>specific learning disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
impairment and additional health concerns (i.e. other health impaired) and comes to learning center for reading and math support twice a day. Darian is a ten year old, Caucasian, male student in Mrs. White’s class. He has autism and a speech and language impairment and comes to learning center for reading comprehension support. Daniel is a ten year old, Hispanic, male student in Mrs. White’s class. He has a specific learning disability and comes to learning center for reading comprehension and math support two times a day.

Group CD consists of four teachers and the six students who met from 1:15 p.m. to 1:55 p.m. four days a week. On Wednesdays, school got out at 1:45 p.m., therefore cutting the group time short by 10 minutes. Thomas is a nine year old, Caucasian, male student in Ms. Freeman’s class. He has a specific learning disability and comes to learning center for reading and math support twice a day. Tasha is a ten year old, African-American, female student in Miss George and Mrs. Finkle’s class. She has a specific learning disability and comes to learning center for reading comprehension, decoding, and math support at three different times during the day. Edward is a nine year old, Hispanic, male student in Miss George and Mrs. Finkle’s class. He has a specific learning disability and speech and language impairment and comes to learning center for reading comprehension and math support. Larissa is a nine year old, African-American, female student in Miss George and Mrs. Finkle’s class. She has a specific learning disability and comes to learning center for reading comprehension support. Chris is a nine year old, African-American, male student in Miss Desmon’s class. He has a specific learning disability and comes to learning center for reading comprehension and math.
support. Javi is a nine year old, African-American, male student in Miss Desmon’s class. He has autism and speech and language impairment and comes to learning center for writing and math support.

**Development of Curriculum and Procedures**

From the review of the literature on teaching self-determination skills to students with disabilities, the current researcher selected to focus on the foundational skills which are: self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting. With this focus in mind, the current researcher began to develop the curriculum by compiling various teaching resources from colleagues, textbooks/workbooks, published curriculum, conference workshops, children’s literature, and online resources. After collecting these resources, the current researcher reviewed each book, lesson, websites, etc. individually to identify components of self-determination (e.g. self-awareness, self-advocacy, goal setting, and choice making) that are the focus in that particular resource. She took notes about each resource, including what aspects of the resource would be used (e.g. discussion questions, written versus oral activities, literature to use, worksheets, etc.), and which of the four focus areas the resource covered. After going through the initial resources, she searched for additional resources online to enhance the books and lessons with meaningful activities, and found additional components that would match well with the content.

Next, the current researcher created a list of the resources under each category: self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting. From the list, she combined resources into daily lessons that would fit into the forty minute time period and
work well together. Following the initial list of lessons, she organized the curriculum into a timeline, where lessons with similar goals were grouped together to be taught in sequence. After the entire list was compiled, the lessons goals and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were written to provide a glance at the purpose of the lesson. A general timeline was created to cover the span of the curriculum and the data collection time period for both participant groups, Group AB and Group CD, based on tracks and classes.

The finalized curriculum consisted of 28 lessons, each topic (i.e. self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting) had seven lessons. The lessons for self-awareness focused on: an introduction to one’s preferences, interests, and dreams; ability to describe oneself including what they can do and what they would like to be able to do; ability to identify learning strengths and strategies to utilize them to support learning, in particular areas of need; and the use of art to demonstrate preferences, interests, and dreams. Next, the lessons on self-advocacy involved: an introduction to the concept of self-advocacy (i.e. sticking up for yourself); discussion of self-advocacy skills in relation to keeping their integrity and uniqueness despite peer pressure; learning about respecting oneself and others as well as coping with bullies while advocating for oneself; discussion of how to acknowledge and appropriately act upon feelings; learning about individual accommodations/modifications and how to ask for these when necessary; and reviewing the steps to problem-solving. Lessons on choice making focused on: an introduction to the concept of choice making; learning about perseverance, informed choice making and decision making and their consequences for oneself and others; discussion of real-life
scenarios to learn the process of choice making; and to make the connection between choice making and personal goals. Finally, the lessons on goal setting included: an introduction to the concept of goal setting; learning about how to set short- and long-term goals, including IEP goals and personal non-academic goals; discussion regarding one’s own responsibility to follow through in order to progress towards goals; and helping students to recognize how they learn, what their limitations are, and what supports they need to reach their goals. As discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter 1, the entire curriculum unit incorporated activities that utilized Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, Bandura’s social learning theory, Locke and Latham’s goal setting theory, and the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction to reach all students’ strengths and needs (see Appendix A for curriculum unit).

All six general education teachers of the fourth grade team reviewed drafts of the curriculum to ensure age-appropriate materials and grade-level work that could support students’ IEP goals and the curriculum in the classroom. The teachers approved of the sources and were especially fond of the choice of literature books. Three teachers specifically stated that their fourth graders still love read-aloud stories, and many of them teach great life lessons within the text. To confirm the texts chosen were appropriate, the lexile level was reviewed. The stories ranged from 240 (first grade level) to 830 (sixth grade level). As the stories would be read aloud, the range was appropriate, as these students do not read on the fourth grade level, but are able to understand more difficult concepts at the sixth grade level when read aloud to them. A majority of the texts fell within the fourth grade lexile range.
Once the unit began, the current researcher followed a consistent routine to ensure reliability and fidelity of implementation of the curriculum across the two groups. When the students arrived at their regularly scheduled reading block time in the learning center, the researcher took attendance and marked when students were late, absent, in-class, or otherwise. Then, the lesson would begin and be followed as written in the lesson plans.

**Data Collection Methods**

Multiple sources were used to collect data in this study (See Table 2).

**AIR Self-Determination Scale**

The AIR Self-Determination Scale was used to collect pre- and post-intervention data, as well as establish a baseline of what opportunities the students have to learn and use self-determination skills at school and at home. Students, teachers, and parents completed this survey scale prior to the curriculum implementation and after completing the curriculum. The AIR Self-Determination Scale has three separate forms: educator, parent, and student (See Appendix C). All three forms contained two categories of responses: 1) capacity of self-determination skills and 2) opportunity for self-determination skills use. More specifically, the capacity category measures ability, knowledge, and perceptions of self-determination skills, while opportunity for using these skills are recorded for both home and school settings. In the pre-survey, given before the curriculum unit, both capacity and opportunity sections were completed by all three participant groups (student, teacher, and parent). For the post-survey, only capacity questions were given, as opportunity should not change in the home or school settings in
Across all of the questions given, within capacity and opportunity measures, there were three sub categories that broke down the scores into more specific traits: “Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust”. The “Think” category asked questions regarding the student’s ability to identify and express their interests, abilities, and needs, as well as to set goals to meet those needs. The “Do” category asked questions about the student’s ability to make choices, to plan to meet the set goals, and take action to complete the plan. Lastly, “Adjust” asked questions regarding the student’s ability to evaluate the results of actions from a plan, and to identify any alterations needed to be made to the plan (Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994).

Table 2

Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Completed by</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIR Self-Determination Scale with Open Ended Questions</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Pre and post self-determination curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Form</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator Form</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Questions developed by current researcher</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Pre and post self-determination curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Reflection Notes</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation Rating Scale</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Post self-determination curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The capacity scores and the “Think”, “Do”, “Adjust” scores were compared for data analysis (see Chapter 4), and the opportunity scores were available to view as background information and creating a complete profile of the student in the pre-survey.

**Supplemental Questions**

Supplemental open-ended questions were included with the pre- and post-surveys for teachers and parents (See Appendix C). There were 17 yes/no questions with space available to write explanations or give examples. In particular, the teachers and parents could record whether students exhibited a particular self-determination skill or behavior in the previous two weeks (e.g. attempting more tasks, turning in homework, setting a goal, etc.). The current researcher developed these questions based on skills and examples studied in the curriculum unit as well as from the AIR Self-Determination Scale. The purpose of the supplemental questions was to give parents and teachers opportunities to write responses to explain or give examples of the student’s self-determined behaviors or lack thereof.

The current researcher developed this data tool to compare yes/no responses between the pre- and post-surveys to see if the behavior or skill remained consistent over time or if a change occurred (e.g. from “no” to “yes” or “yes” to “no”). Written responses were also analyzed to make connections between other data measures or to better understand a given answer (See Chapter 4 for analysis).

**Researcher Reflection Notes**

At the end of each lesson, the current researcher would write in a journal as a reflection of what actually occurred in the lesson, including any changes or adjustments
of lesson timelines. This was important because student work samples only showed written work, but discussions that occurred during lessons could reveal potential learning and growth, and therefore, were documented in the reflection journal. These research notes were used to document quotes from students during the lessons and include thoughts from the current researcher on how to make changes for future implementation, what changes were made from original lesson plans, and important moments from teaching the lesson that appeared to show student growth within the curriculum. After completion of teaching all groups the self-determination curriculum, handwritten notes were typed and analyzed for themes, such as examples of self-determination use and changes to the curriculum (Results are presented in Chapter four).

**Motivation Scale**

A motivation scale was given to the students along with the post-survey after the completion of the unit. This was not given in the pre-intervention session, as it was not developed in time for Group CD to complete prior to the intervention being implemented. The current researcher developed the scale by reviewing topics covered in the curriculum unit and topics measured in the AIR Self-Determination Scale to create the 8 prompts used in the motivation scale. Students ranked a particular behavior or activity from school from one (Strongly Agrees) to five (Strongly Disagrees) to state how motivated they were to do the listed behavior activity. The measure listed important components to the four self-determination skills in the focus of the unit for students to rate (e.g. making a choice, setting a goal, work harder in school, etc.). Students were also given an “other” section to write in additional things they were motivated to do.
Calculating a mean score gave an overall view of how motivated students were to complete certain tasks or self-determined behaviors. Areas of strong motivation and lack of motivated were also examined during data analysis (See Chapter 4).

**Observation and Recording Procedures**

The current researcher was the teacher presenting the lessons and collecting pre- and post-intervention data measures from students, parents, and teachers. The current researcher took notes throughout the lesson to remember certain phrases or words the students used in oral discussions in the lessons. After every lesson, the current researcher wrote a detailed reflection of the day’s lesson, from what was accomplished, what the students did and said that was important to the lessons, and what may have changed from the lesson plans. Attendance was also recorded daily, marking students as absent, in class, late, or on time. All student work samples were kept by the current researcher to use as possible sources of data collection.

**Baseline**

Baseline data on the perceptions of students’ self-determination skills was collected from students, parents, and teachers using the entire AIR Self-Determination Scale and an additional set of supplemental questions for the parents and teachers. The scales, along with the consent forms, were given out in advance, prior to starting the self-determination lessons. The students completed the pre-intervention survey with the current researcher on their first day after signing an assent form. The pre-intervention surveys were scored by the current researcher after receiving them and stored in a safe location until after the study was completed. The scores for each survey were calculated
using the “think”, “do”, and “adjust” raw scores, and when these three scores were added together, it measured the capacity of the skills for the students.

**Intervention Phase**

After the baseline data was collected, the students participated in 28 lessons designed for the self-determination curriculum. The unit lessons started with a broad introduction to self-determination, and moved through each subcategory: self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting. The lessons were anticipated to last for 28 days, but due to outside factors, such as field trips, assemblies, absences, and holiday breaks, the lessons lasted longer than one lesson per day. The lesson plan timeline was followed as closely as possible, but if the lessons took longer than the allotted forty minutes, daily lessons were pushed back as needed. This resulted in lessons being split between days and a delayed timeline of implementation for both Group AB and Group CD.

For Group AB, the unit lessons took 29 days to complete, from January 4th to March 7th. This did not include days where lessons did not occur due to outside factors. The last two weeks of unit lessons had double sessions, during reading and math group sessions, to complete the lessons before Track A went off for five weeks.

For Group CD, the timelines differed because the second half of the curriculum needed to be taught twice, once to Track D students and then to Track C students, due to the year round calendar. The Track C students went off-track for a month and when the Track D students finished the lessons, they went off-track and the Track C students returned and were able to complete the remainder of the lessons. The timeline for Group
CD was October 26th to February 26th. Track D lessons took 38 days, and Track C lessons took 36 days.

**Post Intervention**

After the completion of the self-determination curriculum unit, the researcher collected the post-intervention data using the modified AIR Self-Determination Scale survey with the student, parents, and teachers, supplemental questions for teachers and parents, and the motivation scale for students. The researcher then went through the data reduction process with all of the measures used in this study. The process is explained in more detail below.

**Data Analysis**

The components of the AIR Self-Determination Scale were implemented differently in the pre- and post-survey for the students, teachers, and parents. As stated previously, the entire scale was given for the pre-survey to create a picture of the students’ opportunities for using the self-determination skills in addition to students’ capacity for using the self-determination skills. The post-survey only measured their capacity for using the self-determination skills, and the portions regarding opportunities to use them at home and at school were not measured again due to the fact that the time frame for the study was considered too short for meaningful changes to occur in opportunity. Each sub-section of the survey, on all forms, was broken down into three components: “Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust.” A student’s capacity to demonstrate all three areas was measured and specifically laid out on the teacher’s form, as “Knowledge,” “Ability”, and “Perceptions.” In the parent form, it was categorized as “Things my child
does”, and for the student form it was broken into “Things I do” and “How I feel” (Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994). The capacity scores for each pre- and post-survey were compared for analysis, and raw scores for “Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust” were compared for perceptions of individual growth.

After the completion of the unit and all of the data were collected, the researcher went through the data reduction process. First, a scoring sheet for all of the AIR Self-Determination Scales was completed (see Appendix C). The baseline (pre) and post-intervention data had individual raw scores for “Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust”, which combined for overall capacity scores.

Next, the researcher organized the AIR Self-Determination Scale score data into Excel spreadsheets. Each individual student’s raw scores (“Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust”) were put into a chart for both the pre- and post-intervention from the student, teacher, and parent surveys. This resulted in eleven charts, one per student, that included all of the raw data scores. Following this, the raw scores (“Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust”) combined to create the capacity score for the pre- and post-intervention and were listed in an Excel sheet to compare the scores. All eleven students and their raw scores were listed in one chart with all three sets of survey scores (student, teacher, and parent pre and post). As a component of the AIR Self-Determination Scale, there was a free response section asking about a goal the student is working on. This was included for both the pre- and post-intervention surveys, and the written responses were recorded as qualitative data in a Word document.
The pre-post intervention supplemental questions were provided to both parents and teachers with the AIR Self-Determination Scale, and were yes/no questions with space provided to write in comments or explanations. The yes/no responses from the supplemental questions were entered in an Excel chart and compared as pre- and post-intervention data for each student. The pre-post written responses were typed into a document for qualitative data analysis.

A motivation scale was given to the students at the end of the self-determination unit, as a post-intervention measure, to see if students perceived their motivations in school. Scores from the motivation scale, given to the students on the last day of the unit, were recorded in an Excel chart and the “other” comments (i.e. additional things the student was motivated to do) were typed below the scores on the chart. Each of the eight scores per student were averaged to calculate a students’ average motivation score.

Lastly, the current researcher read through the handwritten reflection notes that were taken daily after lessons occurred and highlighted, using two colored pens, information in two categories: 1) student quotes or actions that demonstrate self-determination skills and 2) comments about or changes to the curriculum. After these two categories were highlighted in the notes, the researcher typed these specific notes into a document. Then each participants’ name was highlighted with a distinct color to help distinguish individualized qualitative data to analyze for themes. Examples of self-determination and themes were compiled for individual students and are further reviewed to support findings from all the data in Chapter 4 that was collected.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

A pre-post measure design was used to examine the growth of self-determination skills (self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting) for 11 fourth grade students with disabilities that attend a learning center for reading support. The student participants, their classroom teachers, and their parents completed the AIR Self-Determination Scale prior to the implementation of a self-determination curriculum unit and also, after completion of the unit. Teacher reflection notes were documented. A post-intervention motivation scale, written responses on the pre- and post-surveys, and supplemental questions were used to add more depth and understanding to the capacity scores that were calculated from the pre-post AIR Self-Determination Scale (See Table 3).
Table 3

*Capacity Scores from the AIR Self-Determination Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Student Survey</th>
<th>Teacher Survey</th>
<th>Parent Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darian</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selena</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasha</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larissa</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54.4(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javi</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table (Table 3) shows the combined three scores (“Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust”) that create the capacity score from the AIR Self-Determination Scale for each student from each pre- and post-surveys (student, teacher, and parent). Three of the students (Larissa, Tasha, and Edward) had two teacher scores because they have teachers who job share. Miss George teaches three days a week and Mrs. Finkle teaches two days a week. These teacher scores were averaged for analysis purposes.

The following figures (Figures 1-3) depict the pre- and post-capacity scores, based on student, teacher, and parent self-report. The blue line (bottom) shows the

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\(^1\) Larissa, Tasha, and Edward had two scores for the teacher survey as they had two teachers that share a contract, Ms. George and Mrs. Finkle. The scores above are an average of the two scores.
Figure 1  
*Student Capacity Survey Scores*

![Student Capacity Survey Scores](image)

Figure 2  
*Teacher Capacity Survey Scores*

![Teacher Capacity Survey Scores](image)
pre-intervention capacity score, and the red line (top) shows the post-intervention capacity score. Each student’s capacity scores from student, parent and teacher pre- and post-surveys will be discussed in the following presentation of findings for individual students.

**Findings for Individual Students**

Due to the number of data collection methods used in this study, each student’s individual data will be reviewed separately. In addition, the trends that occurred for the overall study will be reviewed as a whole after presentation of the findings from the individual student data. Individual data was used rather than aggregate (e.g. mean, standard deviation) because the small sample size and short amount of time for the intervention did not show significant growth in perceptions of student’s self-determination skills.
Jacob, Group AB

Think-do-adjust raw scores.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jacob - Individual Scores</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above table, Jacob’s post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased from his pre-scores across all surveys (parent, student, and teacher). Jacob’s highest scores were in the “Think” subcategory, meaning his strength was his ability to identify and express his interests, abilities, and needs, as well as setting goals to meet those needs.

Capacity scores. When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Jacob’s scores increased from pre to post in all three surveys, and his own student survey increased by 13 points. Compared to the majority of the other participants, this is a noteworthy amount of perceived growth.

Free response - goal setting. Based on the free response questions from the survey, Jacob’s parent did not record a goal he was working on in the pre-survey, while
Jacob first stated that he was working on being smart by making a plan in his head. He reported that he is doing well in school because of it. In his post-survey, Jacob stated his current goal was getting better at X-Box games by practicing and he was doing well. Jacob’s teacher listed specific goals he was working on for both the pre- and post-surveys, such as getting to school on time, turning in homework, writing a paragraph, and mastering his multiples in math. According to the teacher, Jacob is working towards these goals and did master his writing goal by the post-survey.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Jacob changed from a “no” response to a “yes” response in one area, “more focused/determined on schoolwork” when rated by his parent, but from a “yes” to a “no” response for “attempting a task more than once.” Of note, he changed from a “yes” to a “no” response from pre- to post-survey in multiple areas according to his teacher, including: “setting a goal,” “asking a question to clarify,” “attempting a task more than once,” “expressing satisfaction or disappointment,” “expressing an opinion or belief,” “increased participation in school,” “expressing his needs,” “expressed more interest in school or learning,” and “attempting more tasks.” The comments provided for these responses did not clarify why so many of the responses changed between the pre- and post-surveys (i.e. he was perceived as demonstrating less self-determined behaviors). Jacob’s parent wrote on the pre-survey, “I wish my son would have some goals for his present and future that he will be motivated [about]” and provided no additional responses on the post-survey. The teacher provided responses regarding Jacob’s strengths and weaknesses, on both the pre- and post-surveys, as well as examples for his
responsibilities and when he expresses his needs and opinions, such as his strengths in math, weaknesses in spelling and writing, and his homework responsibilities.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Jacob asked clarifying questions during activities, as well as for spelling support in his writing. Jacob used tools he was given for assignments, such as the adjective dictionary when writing, but would also tell the teacher when he wanted to try spelling things on his own. When reviewing the vocabulary words at the beginning of lessons, Jacob was able to remember “self-determination” on his own after a few weeks of the unit. On three occasions, Jacob shut down and did not participate in the lesson because he was upset due to getting in trouble earlier in the school day, or to losing the first few minutes of recess for getting frustrated and giving up on assignments in learning center.

Jacob also did well with remembering information from the unit, such as his personal learning styles and all of the choices made in the story *Jamaica’s Find*. Jacob also had great insights during lessons. For example, when discussing bullying and peer pressure, Jacob asked the group, “If you were bullied, how would you feel?” He also used the example of bullying as a choice people make, “to bully or not.” Jacob actively participated in lessons, whether correcting a peer for being a bully (“it’s not funny… with bullies you need to tell a teacher or principal and walk away”) or guessing a definition of a new word (e.g. “disability is like having a power”).

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Jacob rated himself with a mean score of 1.6 (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated). Jacob’s
highest score (i.e. not motivated to do) was for setting a goal, which matches his teacher’s evaluation of his lack of goal setting from the supplemental question responses. Jacob’s lowest scores (i.e. motivated to do), were for doing his homework, asking for help, and going to an adult when he has a problem.

**Jack, Group AB**

*Think-do-adjust raw scores.*

Table 5  
*Jack - Individual Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE</th>
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<th>POST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, Jack’s post-scores stayed the same from his pre-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale and increased or stayed the same across all surveys (parent, student, and teacher), except for one score. The teacher’s “Adjust” score, for Jack’s knowledge of self-determined behaviors, went down from six points to four points. This means that Jack’s teacher did not see growth in him evaluating the results of plan of action, and making any alterations that need to be made to a plan.
**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Jack’s scores increased from pre- to post on all three surveys, and on his own student survey increased by 21 points. Jack’s self-reported perceived growth was the largest of all of the student participants.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Jack’s parent listed things he was working on for both the pre- and post-surveys. First, she stated that Jack collects coins he finds in the park to reach his goal of buying an X-box, as well as collecting cans to recycle and walking dogs for money. At the end of the unit, Jack’s parent stated that he is working on improving his math skills and attends a tutor on Saturdays. Jack wrote similar goals, compared to the parents responses: first, improving his math skills, and second, practicing his games. Both parent and student pre- and post-surveys stated Jack is doing well on his goals. The teacher’s response for Jack’s goals were generally math-based as well, working on his multiples and multiplication, but also included spelling words correctly in the post-survey. The teacher stated on the pre- and post-survey that Jack is making progress towards these goals.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Jack changed from a “no” to a “yes” response in four areas, “increased participation in school” and “expressing his needs” according to his parent, and “set a goal” and “more focused on completing schoolwork” according to his teacher. Jack changed from a “yes” response to a “no” response in multiple areas according to the teacher and parent from pre- to post-survey, but the overlapping areas (e.g. both rated “no”) include: attempting a task more than once and expressed more interest in school or
learning. The comments provided for these responses did not clarify why so many of the responses moved from “yes” to “no” responses between the pre- and post-surveys, but the teacher did state that she was not sure whether Jack expressed interest in school in both surveys. Jack’s parent and teacher wrote examples of his perceived self-determined behaviors, such as his strengths and weaknesses, his ability to ride his bike to school alone and completing assignments in class.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Jack started exhibiting traits of self-determination from the first week, where he would ask for his spelling dictionary when he was writing. He was able to connect the vocabulary to specific activities, such as the learning inventory and he said the inventory was like self-awareness. He also said *The Little Engine that Could* is like working hard when you are frustrated. Jack was also able to list the choices that the main character in *Jamaica’s Find* made. He was even able to identify specific examples of choice making and self-advocacy, more than once, in *I Knew You Could*, and stated “you can try to be what you want when you’re older, like goal setting” in the *OK Book*. This is significant because Jack was able to connect examples of self-determination to the literature and real life examples.

Jack also showed his knowledge of the unit in various discussions. When another student said he would fight a bully, Jack interjected and said, “No… you’ll get in trouble.” Jack also defined choice making with an example of whether to pick computer time or a prize each week in learning center. In addition, he was able to recognize the term “self-determination” when reviewed at the start of lessons, and remembered his
learning inventory styles two days later. Even if Jack was not sure about a definition, he would still share his ideas, when he defined “disability” as doing something like being invisible, and then noted this could also be an ability, which sparked additional conversation with the group.

Jack struggled with the amount of writing required, and occasionally he got upset due to his frustration with writing. He needed one-on-one support during the pre-survey to write his goal, and he received some modifications of the writing when it was too overwhelming to complete all the sentences. A strategy that worked for Jack was to have him state his answer or idea to the current researcher and to have her write it on the board for Jack to copy, yet, towards the end of the unit, he would ask to spell words on his own. Jack was also supportive of peers when they struggled. For example, a student could not think of a positive answer to say about himself, so Jack joined in and shared kind things about the peer to help him out. He also stated that a change that can be made by someone could be to “change the world” which may show that he does not see limits to possibilities.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Jack rated himself with a mean score of 2.4, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated). Jack’s highest scores (i.e. not motivated to do), were for setting a goal and working harder in school. His lowest score (i.e. motivated to do) was asking for help.
Daniel, Group AB

Think-do-adjust raw scores.

Table 6
Daniel - Individual Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>POST</th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Survey</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
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<tr>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, Daniel’s post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased from his pre-scores for the teacher’s scores in all areas. Daniel’s parents did not return the pre-survey, so there are no scores to compare to the post-survey.

Daniel’s self-reported scores increased overall, but decreased in the “Adjust” categories for both “Things I do” and “How I feel.” The “Adjust” category focuses on evaluating results from a plan to make changes and improve.

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Daniel’s scores increased from pre to post on his teacher’s surveys, but decreased by two points on his own surveys. As stated above, the parent pre-survey was not returned to be able to compare scores.
**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Daniel’s teacher stated that he is working on completing and turning in work in the pre-survey and writing his name with a capital letter in the post-survey. In both cases, he has not reached these goals and needs reminders to work on the goals, according to his teacher. Daniel’s own goal was the same for both surveys, working on his hover board tricks, and he stated he was doing well.

**Supplemental questions.** When looking at the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Daniel did not change from any “no” responses to “yes” responses in any areas, but did change from “yes” to “no” responses in six areas according to his teacher. The areas were: “stating his weaknesses,” “setting a goal,” “more focused to complete schoolwork,” “increased participation in school,” “attempting more tasks,” and “seeming more excited in school.” The comments provided for these responses by his teacher did not clarify why so many of the responses changed between the pre- and post-surveys, but simply provided examples for the questions, such as what his strengths and weaknesses are, which were both related to math.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Daniel often asked for spelling help, used the adjective dictionary, and asked clarifying questions. Daniel also was able to remember “self-determination” when reviewing terms at the beginning of lessons, and could find examples of terms in lessons, such as finding examples of self-awareness in the book *I Knew You Could*. He also knew the sayings and rules from the group, where he once said to a peer, “Remember, Ms. Coyne says ‘no whining.’”
Daniel had some difficulties in the unit, especially with the perseverance sign language activity. He became frustrated and needed to be asked to take a deep breath and try again. When learning about problem-solving and bullying, Daniel struggled to see appropriate ways to deal with conflict. He stated that he needed to fight back against bullies, and he even laughed at a character in *Everyone Has Something* who was bullied for being overweight. Other students corrected him in the moment. Daniel also struggled to change his behavior when he came into the group in a bad mood and he would not participate in discussions or any activities.

However, Daniel was helpful to peers, just as they were to him. When a student could not think of anything positive to say about himself, Daniel gave him ideas to be more positive. Also, when a student shared about doing things with friends that they did not want to do, Daniel told that student, “They can’t make you.” Daniel also had insight about how to ask for accommodations based on his learning style: “[I can] type on the computer or write things down if listening is hard.” Daniel did struggle with the area of self-awareness, as he did not identify any of his needs. Interestingly, when learning about celebrities with disabilities, another student connected Daniel to a given example of a celebrity who was not able to sit still, and Daniel was surprised and did not understand why he was like the celebrity. The current researcher explained that not sitting still was not a bad thing, but he needed to learn how to work with it.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Daniel rated himself with a mean score of 1.1, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated).
Daniel’s highest score (i.e. not motivated to do) was for setting a goal, while the other 7 topics were rated equally with a 1 (i.e. motivated to do).

**Darian, Group AB**

**Think-do-adjust raw scores.**

Table 7

*Darian - Individual Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>PRE</strong></th>
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<th><strong>POST</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
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<td><strong>Student Survey</strong></td>
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<td>How I Feel</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Survey</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Survey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, Darian’s post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased or stayed the same from his pre-scores across the parent and student surveys, but decreased on the teacher survey. This decrease may be due to the increase in Darian’s challenging behaviors and conflicts in the classroom that began in the middle of the curriculum unit, as observed by the current researcher, paraeducators, and classroom teacher.

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Darian’s self-reported scores increased by 7 points from pre- to post-survey, but the teacher survey decreased by 13 points and the parent survey decreased by 1 point. This could mean that
Darian’s self-determined behaviors were not being seen in or transferred in the general education classroom or home.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Darian’s parent stated he is working on not having accidents at night in the pre-survey and keeping his room clean in the post-survey, both of which are in progress. Darian reported that he is working on his Sonic Ultimate game, but is doing poorly at it. In his post-survey, Darian stated his current goal was cleaning his room and he is bad at it too. Darian’s teacher stated that he was working on taking notes and earning stickers for completion to earn computer time in the pre-survey. The teacher reported that his notes are sporadic, and the goal for the post-survey, became to keep his hands to himself, which may reflect the shift in Darian’s behavior over the course of the unit, which the current researcher was aware of from conversations with the classroom teacher and observations.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Darian changed from a “no” response to a “yes” response in three areas, “turned in more homework” when rated by his parent, and “expressing his needs” and “attempting more tasks” when rated by his teacher. Darian also changed from a “yes” to a “no” response in multiple areas according to his teacher and parent, and the areas that overlapped were “attempting a task more than once” and “increased participation in school.” The comments provided for these responses did not clarify why so many of the responses changed between the pre- and post-surveys, but conversations about his change in behavior (i.e. increase of inappropriate behaviors) may have been an
influence on these scores. The parent did leave a comment on the pre-survey stating “[Darian]’s a great kid – his speech impairment holds him back from making friends…”

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Darian participated in discussions willingly and exhibited knowledge of self-determination skills. When asked what self-awareness means, he stated “it’s all about yourself,” and he would often use his spelling dictionary without prompting. He was also able to remember the meaning of self-determination on more than one occasion. In addition, Darian would connect lessons, such as *Dream Big, Little Pig* with the *OK Book*, as they both used a repeating line of “and that’s okay” and he even stated, “the pig is better at things than the OK man.” Darian could also relate school examples to his real life. When asked how to advocate for something in school, Darian said he would ask the teacher to repeat a question if he missed it.

However, Darian struggled to see other perspectives or discuss hypothetical situations. For example, when discussing choice making, Darian thought it was only about making bad choices, even after multiple examples of good choices given. He stated he never does bad things and did not think of a good thing that was a choice he made. When asked to state his strengths or something he was good at, Darian would often get frustrated because he could not think of one, and peers would join in and give him ideas. Writing is also difficult for Darian, and he needed modifications on certain assignments, such as less sentences required, more time/more sessions to complete the writing, or copying his verbalized ideas from the board.
**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Darian rated himself with a mean score of 2.3, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated). Darian’s highest score (i.e. not motivated to do) was for doing things I love, even if my friends don’t like it, followed by do my homework, and go to an adult for help. Darian’s lowest scores (i.e. motivated to do), were for participating in class, asking for help, and making choices on his own.

**Selena, Group AB**

**Think-do-adjust raw scores.**

Table 8  
*Selena - Individual Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE</th>
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<th></th>
<th>POST</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Survey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
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<td>How I Feel</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher Survey</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Parent Survey</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, Selena’s post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased from the pre-scores, except for three scores across the student and teacher surveys. Selena’s self-report of the “Think” score “Things I do” (her ability to identify and express her interests, abilities, and needs), decreased by one point, and her teacher’s
score for ability to perform self-determined behaviors in the “Think” category (identifying interests and needs) decreased by two points. The teacher’s “Adjust” score in perception of knowledge and ability (her ability to make changes to a plan to reach her goals), also decreased by two points. Her parent’s scores remained the same.

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Selena’s scores increased in her own student survey by 9 points and in her teacher’s scale, it increased by 2 points. The parent survey stayed the same.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Selena’s parent only provided a goal for the post-survey, stating that she is reading books and doing her homework to get better at reading. In her pre-survey, Selena reported that she is working on reading and needs more practice on it. In her post-survey, Selena stated her current goal was not fighting with her sister and she is doing okay at it. Selena’s teacher stated that she is working on being more independent for both the pre- and post-surveys and she is making progress on this goal at both points in time.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, according to her parent Selena changed from a “no” response to a “yes” response in one area, “expressing opinions and beliefs,” but changed from a “yes” response to a “no” response in four areas: “stating strengths,” “stating weaknesses,” “making independent decisions,” and “recognizing responsibilities.” Selena remained consistent with her teacher’s scores, only changing a “yes” response to a “no” response in one area: “setting a goal.” The comments provided by the teacher for these responses did not clarify why she changed in the area of goal setting. The teacher provided responses
regarding Selena’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as examples for many of the areas listed such as her need to work on multiplication and being positive about passing her spelling test. Selena’s parent did not write any additional comments on the survey.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Selena was able to participate in discussions with her understanding of the self-determination skills. When asked how to advocate in class, Selena said she would ask to see a picture with a science lesson to support her visual learning strength. She also told a peer who was being a bully that it was not funny to laugh at someone else. Selena was also very involved in the discussion of disabilities, where she defined a disability as being different and saying these people can get jobs, but some jobs would be hard to do if you cannot walk. Selena was also aware of peers’ strengths and weaknesses. For example, she connected an example of a celebrity who had an inability to sit still with a peer in the group who acted similarly. She was able to connect her IEP goals across settings, recognizing that she works on those skills in learning center, speech, and in her classroom, by stating “I do that in class!”

Selena received some supports with writing as well, as she needed spelling support and her handwriting was slower than her peers. She would ask the teacher for her spelling dictionary or how to spell words and copy them from the board. Not only was Selena empowered to ask for help, but she would say, “you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to” when discussions of choice making occurred.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Selena rated herself with a mean score of 2.8, (1 meaning she strongly agrees that she feels motivated
to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning she strongly disagrees that she feels motivated). Selena’s highest scores (i.e. not motivated to do), were for making choices on my own and do the things I love, even if my friends don’t like it. The lowest scores (i.e. motivated to do), were for setting a goal, going to an adult when I have a problem, and working harder in school.

**Thomas, Group CD**

**Think-do-adjust raw scores.**

Table 9

*Thomas - Individual Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Survey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>Parent Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, a number of Thomas’ post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased from his pre-scores across all surveys (parent, student, and teacher), except with a decrease in two student scores, and four teacher scores that stayed the same. Thomas decreased a point in both the “Do” and “Adjust” areas of “Things I do” on his survey, meaning that he perceived his ability to identify his needs and
interests, and adjusting a plan to reach a goal connected to these needs to be slightly stronger than he did on the pre-survey.

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Thomas’ scores increased from all three surveys from pre to post, but the student survey increased the least, by 3 points, while both the parent and teacher surveys increased by 9 points. Compared to the majority of the other participants, this is a significant amount of growth from the teacher and parent surveys.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Thomas’ parent said he is working on reading and spelling and he is trying his best on both pre- and post-survey. Thomas reported that he has no goal for the pre-survey. In his post-survey, Thomas stated his current goal was getting better at reading and he is getting a little better. On both surveys, Thomas’ teacher stated that he is working on turning in his homework, and he is not doing it often.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Thomas changed his “no” responses to “yes” responses in five areas, when rated by his teacher: “independent decision,” “asked for help,” “expressed satisfaction/disappointment,” “increased participation in school,” and “attempted more tasks in school.” Thomas’ parent also saw a change from a “no” response to a “yes” in “attempting more tasks.” No “yes” responses were changed to a “no” response in any of the areas. The comments provided for these responses in the parent post-survey stated that the increase in attempting more tasks was due to “[Thomas] going to learning center.” Thomas’ parent also wrote, “He needs help with more spelling and reading.
Bought him sight word books and flashcards”. The teacher’s responses regarding Thomas’ pre-survey were more negative and how he would “do nothing in class,” but his growth was shown in the post-survey when she wrote that he made the decision to complete all of his math test and got a B and asked for help, showing more self-determined behaviors.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Thomas was able to remember terms from the unit on multiple occasions, and defining them, such as self-determination meaning doing something, even if you don’t have to. Thomas used examples from his own life, especially when learning about problem solving. He was able to articulate the situation and what happened and how he was misunderstood and not trying to get involved in a fight. When scenarios were discussed, Thomas would always jump in and say “go tell an adult and use self-advocacy.” When reading the book *Oh, The Places You’ll Go*, Thomas was able to identify choices the character made, and other self-determination examples. Sometimes he would get self-awareness and self-advocacy confused, but appeared to try hard to understand the examples of each in the book *I Knew You Could*. Thomas was able to come up with self-determination themes on his own towards the end of the unit, when he said *Dream Big, Little Pig* was about goal setting because she reached her dreams.

In addition, Thomas did things to show his knowledge, such as defending his ideas and justifying answers, as well as asking for spelling help with a dictionary or copying words from the board. He also asked clarifying questions when he did not understand something, and asked to use the computer to do research for art projects, like
looking up the Great Wall of China, so he could draw it correctly for his travel art activity.

Thomas did struggle in the larger group because he would argue, or in role-playing scenarios, when he would not back down playing the bully or a person of conflict. When he would get upset or did not want to participate, he would try to give the answers away to the rest of the group, such as telling the ending to a story. Even though the behavior was inappropriate, Thomas stated all the choices Jamaica made in the story *Jamaica’s Find*, before the other students could, which showed knowledge of the material. One benefit of the lessons being longer than anticipated was the fact that all the other members of Thomas’ group had a different track than him, so he completed the ending lessons on the unit independently while they were off-track. Thomas was less reactive and more honest and open in a one-on-one setting, even though he may have missed the benefits of group discussion.

Thomas was able to help the current researcher write his new math goal for his IEP as his annual IEP meeting was the day following the review of IEP goals in the lesson. He pushed himself and strived for a very difficult goal (e.g. multiplying and dividing fractions) to be written in his IEP. Another struggle for Thomas was changing perspectives from kids in the scenarios to the adult’s perspectives. With the scenario of a fourth grader stealing, he said the kid was right and it was not stealing when the friend put the candy in his pocket and he never touched it, because it was the friend’s idea, yet he could not see from the adult perspective that the kid was involved in the crime.

Thomas also strongly cares about how he is viewed by peers and stated that he would
only ignore a friend doing something bad in the moment, but would be their friend later on still.

Thomas was able to relate to characters who struggled with reading, like himself, and recognized that he needed to ask for supports, like manipulatives for math. When given celebrity examples of disabilities, Thomas asked, “Don’t actors read a lot, how can they do that [when reading is hard for them]?,” later making the connection to perseverance. When relating to the character with reading deficits in *How I Learn*, Thomas stated that he does not like that he learns differently, but agreed that without learning center, school would be a lot harder.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Thomas rated himself with a mean score of 2.8, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated). Thomas’ highest score (i.e. not motivated to do) was for asking for help. His lowest score (i.e. motivated to do) was for setting a goal.
Tasha, Group CD

Think-do-adjust raw scores.

Table 10
Tasha - Individual Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Survey</th>
<th>PRE</th>
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<th>POST</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
<td>Think: 9</td>
<td>Do: 9</td>
<td>Adjust: 9</td>
<td>Think: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
<td>Think: 10</td>
<td>Do: 10</td>
<td>Adjust: 10</td>
<td>Think: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Survey (G, F)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
<td>4, 4</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
<td>3, 6</td>
<td>4, 4</td>
<td>2, 6</td>
<td>6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>2, 7</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Survey</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, Tasha’s pre- and post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale were inconsistent across all surveys (parent, student, and teacher). Tasha’s teacher scores that did decrease were only by a point and only by one of her two teachers. The student survey scores decreased or stayed the same for all subcategories, which may be due to the fact that Tasha appeared to understand the questions more when completing the post-survey and recorded more reasonable and accurate responses compared to her responses to the pre-survey.

Capacity scores. When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Tasha’s scores increased from pre and post parent and teacher surveys. Her self-reported score dropped 16 points from pre- to post-survey scores, while her teacher’s scores increased by 8 points and 4 points, and her parent’s scores increased by 1 point. Compared to the
majority of the other student participants, this is a large decrease in the self-reported score.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from both the pre- and post-surveys, Tasha’s parent both the pre- and post-surveys, and that she is still working on them. Tasha reported that she is doing well on her pre-survey goal of getting better at soccer and her post-survey goal of getting better at math. Both teachers in the pre-survey stated that Tasha is working on increasing her fluency and that she is enthusiastic and making progress. The two goals from the teachers’ post-surveys were: writing complete sentences and completing math homework. Both teachers report that she is making progress with these goals.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Tasha changed in six areas, according to her parent. Tasha changed from “no” to “yes” responses in “independent decisions,” “increased participation in school,” and “attempted more tasks,” and she changed from “yes” to “no” responses in “expressed her needs,” “stating strengths,” and “stating weaknesses.” Her teachers saw the same changes of “yes” to “no” responses, in addition to: “ask a question to clarify and expressed satisfaction/disappointment with outcome,” and a split between teachers for changes for “set a goal.” In addition, the teachers saw a change from “no” to “yes” responses in: “turned in more homework,” “expressing more interest in school,” “attempting more tasks,” and “asking for help.” The comments provided by the teachers and parent for these responses did not clarify the changes between the pre- and post-surveys.
Reflection notes. From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Tasha was very quiet in the group, but when seen individually to make up work, or when asked to state her whispered comments louder, she contributed ideas for discussions. When discussing how to deal with bullies, she said to tell an adult and walk away and she also knew how to solve peer social problems in the group setting. With the specific example of seeing a friend being mean to a first grader, Tasha said she did not need to be their friend anymore, and to “be a leader, not a follower.” A goal that Tasha set after reading *The Little Engine That Could* was to tell people to stop bullying, and a general school goal was to get better at her math facts. Tasha was also able to use some of the vocabulary terms, such as self-advocacy, when referring to the giraffe in *Giraffes Can’t Dance*, and disability when referring to individuals in wheelchairs.

Tasha also used her spelling dictionary when encouraged, or she would directly ask the teacher for spelling help and would copy the words from the board. Another student in the group also helped Tasha with activities that required reading that were not read aloud whole group; otherwise she would copy down words she saw without knowing the meaning.

Motivation scale. When reviewing the motivation scale data, Tasha rated herself with a mean score of 1.9, (1 meaning she strongly agrees that she feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning she strongly disagrees that she feels motivated). Tasha’s highest score (i.e. not motivated to do), was for doing the things I love, even if my friends don’t like it, and followed by making choices on my own. Tasha’s lowest
scores (i.e. motivated to do) covered the 6 remaining of the topics. For “other,” Tasha wrote that she is motivated “to help mom.”

**Larissa, Group CD**

**Think-do-adjust raw scores.**

Table 11
*Larissa - Individual Scores*

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<tr>
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<th>PRE</th>
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<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
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<td>How I Feel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Survey (G, F)</td>
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<td>3, 6</td>
<td>2, 7</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>6, 8</td>
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<td>7, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
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<td>4, 7</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As seen in the above chart, Larissa’s post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased in a number of subcategories from her pre-scores across all surveys (parent, student, and teacher), with decreases in a few subcategories by the teachers and student herself. Larissa’s “Do” score for “How I feel,” meaning her feelings about how she uses self-determination skills, decreased. Both teachers scored Larissa lower in the post-survey for “Think” in the category of “Perception of knowledge and ability”, meaning Larissa’s perceptions of her self-determination skills for how she identifies her interests and needs decreased. Her parent’s scores increased for 2 subcategories and stayed the same for one.
**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Larissa’s scores increased from pre- to post-surveys for her teachers and parents, while this score on her own surveys decreased by 3 points. This may be due to the fact that she and another peer needed to retake the pre-survey because they were not taking it seriously and tried copying each other’s answers. Her self-report pre-survey scores may not be an accurate representation of her perceptions.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Larissa’s parent stated in the pre-survey that her goal was to pay more attention in class and that she is not doing that well yet. In the post-survey, her parent said that Larissa was working on being more responsible with her homework and that she is making slow progress. Larissa wrote her goal was to get better at math for both surveys, and her steps to achieve it changed from pre- to post-survey. At first, Larissa said she would get smarter to reach her goal, but in the post-survey she said she would pay attention more and go to college. Her teacher, Ms. George, stated that Larissa’s pre-survey goal was staying focused in a lesson and that her progress varies from day to day. Her post-survey goal was to read a passage, follow the directions, and answer questions. On the post-survey, Ms. George stated that Larissa wants to succeed, but continues to rush through the steps. Her other teacher, Mrs. Finkle shared that Larissa’s pre-survey goal was to multiply two-digit numbers and that her post-survey goal was to work more independently. For both goals, Mrs. Finkle noted that Larissa is improving.

**Supplemental questions.** When looking at the pre and post supplemental question data, Larissa changed from “no” responses to “yes” responses in multiple areas
on both teachers’ and parent’s surveys. The parent saw positive changes in: “turned in more homework,” “expressing more interest in school,” “attempting more tasks,” “more focus and determination to complete schoolwork,” “express opinion/ belief,” and “made more than one attempt to complete task.” In addition to this, the teachers saw changes in: “more excited about school,” “expressing her needs,” “increasing participation in school,” “expressed satisfaction/ disappointment,” “asked a question to clarify,” “set a goal,” and “stating her strengths.” The comments provided for these responses by the parent showed progress that she was making. Larissa’s parent wrote on the pre-survey, “[Larissa] needs to understand that her education is important. She needs more discipline to understand this. Her attention span is very limited and needs additional help.” Of note, on the post-survey she wrote, “[Larissa] has shown a lot of progress, but still has a long way to go in the listening department.”

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Larissa asked questions throughout lessons, and requested spelling help, or used spelling dictionaries when encouraged to use that resource. When working on individual activities, Larissa would be the first to ask to move to a quieter space to get her work done. In terms of the unit vocabulary, Larissa was able to state the definitions of self-determination, self-awareness, and goal setting on many occasions throughout the study, and in the stories *I Knew You Could* and *The Little Engine That Could*, she was able to point out examples of all four terms. From these stories, Larissa was able to say that she would work on choosing good friends, as she struggled with friend scenarios earlier in the unit. For example, when asked about a situation where a friend was bullying a first
grader, Larissa said she would still be that person’s friend, even if she didn’t bully with them. Another scenario was what to do when a younger sibling chewed on your baseball cards, and Larissa said to “hit him a little,” which developed into a larger conversation on bullying and hitting. Larissa showed growth with several weeks later, when a similar bullying situation came up, and her response was “don’t hit, say no, or tell an adult.”

Larissa was also able to connect stories and activities over time to one another, where the pig in *Dream Big, Little Pig* was not good at everything, but that’s okay because she never gave up, like in the *OK Book*. When discussing bullying, Larissa was able to connect the scenarios back to the role-playing where we used “no” statements. She saw from the first day the importance of self-determination, where she interpreted the book *Oh, The Thinks You Can Think* to be about “people [who] could do what they wanted, even if it was silly,” and how *Oh, The Places You’ll Go* was about perseverance. Larissa also connected the story *Think Big, The Little Engine That Could*, and *Giraffes Can’t Dance* because all of the characters needed to try hard and not give up “like perseverance.”

When Larissa was asked to pick an item from her adaptation plan to advocate for, she wanted to have a reduced spelling list, but was scared to ask for the accommodation. The following day, Larissa asked to use this situation to role play, and learned what words to use to talk to her teacher. Larissa also noted how she connected to characters in *Everyone Has Something*, when she saw how they struggled to learn and focus and she shouted out, “That’s me!” Larissa’s motivation to learn more showed through when she stayed after one lesson to learn more about the history of fireworks from the story *Beacon*
the Bright Little Firefly. Larissa was also able to connect the movie “Inside Out” to our lesson on emotions and advocating for our needs to be met when we are not happy.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Larissa rated herself with a mean score of 1.8, (1 meaning she strongly agrees that she feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning she strongly disagrees that she feels motivated). Larissa’s highest scores (i.e. not motivated to do), were for: doing homework, participating in class, asking for help, making choices on her own, doing the things she loves, even if friends don’t like it, and going to an adult when having a problem (i.e. all scores as 2’s). Overall, she was motivated in all areas with her lowest scores (i.e. motivated to do) for setting a goal and work harder in school. For “other,” Larissa wrote that she is motivated to do better at math and on computers.

**Edward, Group CD**

**Think-do-adjust raw scores.**

**Table 12**

Edward - Individual Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Survey</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Do</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Survey (G, F)</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowlege of SD Behaviors</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>5, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
<td>2, 6</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
<td>6, 4</td>
<td>6, 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Survey</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in the above chart, Edward’s pre- and post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale were very inconsistent across all surveys (parent, student, and teacher). In the “Adjust” category (i.e. his ability to adjust a plan to reach a goal) in the student survey, Edward decreased from pre- to post-survey, while his scores remained the same or increased by 1 or 2 points for the subcategories. In the responses from his teachers, Mrs. Finkle’s responses decreased for 6 out of the 9 scores, while Ms. George’s responses increased for all 9 scores. In the parent survey, the “Adjust” column also decreased by 2 points.

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Edward’s scores increased from pre to post in all but one survey (i.e. Mrs. Finkle’s score decreased by 5 points). Interestingly, Ms. George’s score increased by 22 points. Compared to the other participants, Edward’s data for capacity scores were inconsistent with a large amount of growth noted by one teacher, while there was a decrease or lack of growth noted by the other teacher.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Edward’s parent did not record a goal that he was working on, but referred to when he worked hard in the past to reach a goal. For the post-survey, the parent stated that Edward is working on completing homework independently and that he relies on help at school to reach the goal. Edward’s own pre-survey goal was to be better at everything, and his own post-survey goal was to be a video game designer. One area of his growth in the specificity of his post-survey goal as compared to the lack of specificity if his pre-survey goal. Edward’s teachers both identified that his pre-survey goal is
improving his reading comprehension, but that he is unmotivated to work on it. In the post-survey, both teachers saw that Edward was working on his focus in class with some improvements made over time.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Edward changed in four areas, according to his parent’s survey. Edward changed “no” to “yes” responses with “more focused/determined on schoolwork” and “stating strengths” and changed from “yes” to “no” responses with “turned in more homework” and “independent decisions.” According to his teachers, Edward also changed from “yes” responses to “no” responses in multiple areas including: “recognized responsibilities,” “setting a goal,” “attempting a task more than once,” “more focused/determined to complete school work,” “increased participation in school,” “expressing his needs,” “expressed more interest in school or learning,” “seemed more excited about school,” and “attempting more tasks.” The teachers were inconsistent in terms of how they perceived Edward’s turning in more homework. The comments provided were very limited and did not clarify why so many of the responses changed between the pre- and post-survey.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Edward participated often in group discussions, but he would bring in off-topic ideas. When asked to define vocabulary words, Edward would explain it in his own words, such as self-determination meaning “needing to do something, but you don’t have to.” He was often close to the correct definition and was able to strengthen his response with examples.
Edward was able to create a consistent goal that he used all thorough the lessons – becoming a video game designer, which he is working on by being a good student. He was also able to advocate for his needs by moving to a quieter space to complete individual work, so he would be less distracted. Edward was most engaged in the disability discussion because he identified that he had a writing disability, but he is “better now,” and knows the student on campus who is deaf and has an interpreter. When working through scenarios, Edward struggled to take others’ prospectives, but because he missed so many lessons, he missed out on many group discussions. When asked about a first grader getting bullied by a friend, Edward said he would not be mean to the first grader alongside his friend, but would play with that friend later. When given other peer pressure situations, Edward said he would “stand up tell the bully to stop.” Lastly, Edward was able to advocate for himself and ask for the use of a multiplication chart to be taken off his adaptation plan.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Edward rated himself with a mean score of 1.5, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated). Edward’s highest scores (i.e. not motivated to do) were for asking for help, doing his homework, and making choices on his own. Edward’s lowest scores (i.e. motivated to do) were for participating in class, setting a goal, doing things I love, even if my friends don’t like it, going to an adult when I have a problem, and working harder in school. In the “other” section, Edward wrote that he is motivated to help his dad on everything.
Javi, Group CD

Think-do-adjust raw scores.

Table 13
Javi - Individual Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE</th>
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<th>POST</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Adjust</td>
<td>Think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Survey</td>
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<td>Things I Do</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of SD Behaviors</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, the majority of Javi’s post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased from his pre-scores for the parent and teacher surveys, but decreased for the student’s self-report survey. The single teacher score that decreased by 1 point was in the “Adjust” column for “Ability to perform self-determined behaviors.” This may mean that Javi’s ability to adjust his plan for setting goals decreased slightly from his in the teacher’s perspective. Javi’s personal scores changed from a perfect score of 10 in all areas, to mostly 8’s and 9’s and even one 2. Even with an explanation that marking all fives on the survey does not mean it is the “right” answer, Javi continued to mark all fives in the pre-survey. (Note: There are two scores in each category, so the fives for each question equal a ten in each category.) One observation could be that Javi actually showed growth in his post-survey by giving more realistic scores and not giving
himself perfect scores. This change could be interpreted as demonstrating self-determination skills.

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Javi’s scores increased from pre- to post-surveys for parents and his teacher, but decreased 14 points on his own survey. Javi’s more diverse scores in the post-survey may indicate his growth from the self-determination curriculum and being more self-aware of the examples and questions in the survey.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Javi’s parent first recognized his goal as slowing down when doing his homework and with reminders, he is successful with this goal. In the parent post-survey, his goal progressed to checking his homework after finishing it, which he is still working on according to the parent. Javi’s own pre-survey goal was to hit the tetherball the hardest, but his post-survey goal progressed to graduating through college in order to travel and visit his birth mom. The teacher shared math goals for both surveys – multiplying two-digit numbers and working with fractions. For both pre- and post-survey goals, the teacher reported that Javi needs prompting or support to be successful.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Javi changed from “no” to “yes” responses in one area, “express opinion/belief” when rated by his parent. When rated by his teacher, he changed from “no” to “yes” responses for “set a goal” and “made more than one attempt for a task” and changed from “yes” to “no” responses in “asking for help” and “stating weaknesses.” His parent wrote on both the pre- and post-surveys that Javi enjoys going to school and is
happy to learn. The teacher stated on the post-survey, “[Javi has been] very unfocused lately – playing with things in his desk, also several conflicts at recess/lunch with hands-on incidents” which may explain some of the changes in the responses to the supplemental questions form pre- to post-survey.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Javi was the most involved in group discussions and made connections within the lessons frequently. Javi would be able to state the focus word, beyond self-determination, in almost every lesson, and define it. He defined self-awareness as “knowing things about yourself” and self-advocacy as “trying when something gets hard.” Javi often asked questions during lessons, moved to a quieter space when working on individual work, and gave reasons to justify his answers to questions.

After reading the book *Ferdinand the Bull*, Javi stated that “the bull is fine because he shouldn’t stop doing what he likes”, and later connected Ferdinand to Beacon from *Beacon the Bright Little Firefly* because both characters are unique like himself, and did what they wanted, even though they were both told they were wrong. When given hypothetical scenarios, Javi was able to state correct solutions, such as a student needing to advocate for him/herself by telling an adult or standing up to a bully by saying “no.” He even stated that if his friend was a bully to a first grader, he would not keep that friend.

Javi was consistently trying to connect the current vocabulary word to the stories and activities for the day. When we read *When I Grow Up*, he asked, “What does this have to do with choice making?,” and then answered his own question by stating, “Oh,
you get to choose what you want to be.” He also was able to change perspectives after discussions. For example, when a scenario involved a student stealing for his friend, he originally thought it was only the friend’s fault, but later understood how both kids would be in trouble for getting involved. While reading the stories *The Little Engine That Could* and *I Knew You Could*, Javi was able to point out examples of self-awareness, self-determination, self-advocacy, and choice making. He connected the books to his life by stating that he would try new things. For the books *Oh, The Places You’ll Go*, *Think Big*, and *Dream Big, Little Pig*, Javi stated they all had characters that had to try hard to do things. Specifically, Javi stated that the giraffe in *Giraffes Can’t Dance* had perseverance and used goal setting, and in the *OK Book*, okay means not always being good at everything and if you do your best, you can just be okay.

When the discussion of disabilities occurred, Javi immediately connected it to not being good at things and referred to the students on campus from the county. When reading *Everyone Has Something*, in which having a disability is not viewed as a bad thing, he connected with the character that had trouble learning and focusing. He shared that it is good to be like the character because they both persevered.

Of note, there was one area in which Javi did struggle during the lessons’ group dynamics. For example, when others were misbehaving and the group did not earn points, he would become upset because he thought he was being punished when he was not doing anything wrong.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Javi rated himself with a mean score of 1.9, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the
listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated. Javi’s highest scores (i.e. not motivated to do), were for asking for help, and doing the things I love, even if my friends don’t like it. Javi’s lowest scores (i.e. motivated to do), were for all the remaining 6 listed actions. For “other,” Javi wrote that he is motivated to eat a lot of vegetables.

**Chris, Group CD**

**Think-do-adjust raw scores.**

Table 14

*Chris - Individual Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE</th>
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<th>POST</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Student Survey</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Feel</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Survey</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to Perform SD Behaviors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Knowledge and Ability</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Survey</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the above chart, Chris’ post-scores on the AIR Self-Determination Scale increased from his pre-scores by one point or stayed the same for his parent surveys. Chris’ self-report scores decreased by one point in two subcategories: “Do” for “Things I do” and “Think” and “Do” for “How I feel.” For “Do” questions, this refers to making choices to set a goal and creating a plan to reach that goal, and “Think” questions refer to the ability to identify interests and needs. The only score to decrease by 1 point
from the teacher survey pre to post was in the “Think” section for “Perception of knowledge and ability.”

**Capacity scores.** When looking at the capacity scores (Table 3), Chris’ scores increased from the pre- to post-survey on the teacher and parent surveys, but decreased by 1 point on his own survey.

**Free response - goal setting.** Based on the free response questions from the survey, Chris’ parent did not provide responses on either the pre- or post-survey. Chris himself did not have a goal for the pre-survey, but for the post-survey, he stated he wanted to do a back flip and is doing “okay at it.” Chris’ teacher stated a math goal for both the pre- and post-surveys – two-digit multiplication on the pre-survey and working with fractions on the post-survey. According to the teacher on both the pre- and post-survey, Chris is working towards his goal, but is inconsistent and needs step-by-step instruction.

**Supplemental questions.** When reviewing the pre- and post-responses to supplemental questions, Chris changed from “no” to “yes” responses in one area, “recognized responsibilities” when rated by his parent, and changed from a “no” to a “yes” for “asking a clarifying question” and “made more than one attempt to do a task” when rated by his teacher. He also changed from “yes” to “no” responses in two areas according to his teacher including: “turned in more homework” and “more focused/determined to complete schoolwork.” According to the parent, he changed from “yes” to “no” in: “asking for help,” “making independent decisions,” “made more than one attempt on a task,” and “attempting more tasks.” The teacher wrote on the post-
survey that Chris seemed more unfocused lately, which may explain some of the changes in these responses to the survey.

**Reflection notes.** From reviewing the reflection notes from the lessons, Chris was able to ask for help with spelling when writing, defended his ideas in discussions, and asked questions for clarification. Chris sided with the kids in scenarios, rather than thinking through the consequences. For example, with the scenario of a younger sibling ruining his brother’s baseball cards, Chris said he would hit the sibling, which led to a discussion on physical bullying. He also thought a kid who stole for a friend did not mean he would get in trouble, and he needed a longer discussion to realize both kids were at fault. He also knew bullying is wrong, but would not choose to lose friends over it, even though others in the group said they would.

Chris was able to set a realistic goal to work more on his math facts. He was able to connect goal setting and perseverance in *I Knew You Could*, because “the train didn’t give up and got over the hill.” When discussing disabilities, Chris was able to relate Magic Johnson’s medical condition to the supports he got to play in the game. He stated that the coach let him play for only thirty minutes since he was sick and he almost died. Chris was able to connect to the character in *How I Learn* when he was struggling to focus or learn. Chris shouted “That’s me!,” but then became jealous of the character in the book who got the computer to read to him in school.

**Motivation scale.** When reviewing the motivation scale data, Chris rated himself with a mean score of 2.3, (1 meaning he strongly agrees that he feels motivated to do the listed actions, and a 5 meaning he strongly disagrees that he feels motivated). Chris’
highest scores (i.e. not motivated to do), were for asking for help, making choices on his own, and doing things I love, even if my friends don’t like it. His lowest score (i.e. motivated to do) was for working harder in school. For “other,” Chris wrote that he is motivated to use computers.

**Summary of Results**

Overall, 11 fourth grade students participated in the self-determination curriculum unit (i.e., the intervention) and completed both pre- and post-intervention AIR Self-Determination Scale surveys. All of the students’ teachers completed the pre- and post-intervention AIR Self-Determination Scale surveys and all but one parent completed both the pre- and post-intervention AIR Self-Determination Scale surveys. The surveys were used to record the perceptions of students, their parents, and their teachers in terms of the student’s growth in self-determination skills as a result of participation in self-determination curriculum unit. The survey capacity scores showed increases in teacher and parent scores from pre- to post-survey, but due to a small sample size, the significance of this growth could not be statistically calculated in order to demonstrate that the perceptions of the growth in students’ self-determination skills were due to the intervention.

Qualitative data, such as the researcher’s reflection notes, revealed that implementing a structured curriculum to teach self-determination skills, focusing on self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting, may support students’ growth in these skills. Quotes and examples in the researcher’s reflection notes illustrated some amount of growth in all students’ self-determination skills. For instance, students were
able to use the self-determination terms in lessons to describe an action (e.g. “Stick up for yourself means self-advocacy.”). The supplemental question responses and AIR Self-Determination Scale free responses for goal setting provided qualitative data that presented examples of self-determined behavior as reported by parents, teachers, and students. These measures provided limited information about the participants’ perceptions of students’ growth in self-determination skills. Changes in students’ motivation could not be adequately measured as there was no pre-measure of motivation. Regardless, from the post-intervention measure for motivation given to the students did state that they were motivated to work harder in school. These findings in addition to observations that occurred during lessons in the curriculum unit will be discussed in more detail in Chapter five.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the implementation of a self-determination curriculum unit in a learning center that focused on the self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills of fourth grade students with disabilities. In particular, the research question was: What is the impact of the implementation of structured self-determination activities on perceptions of self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills of students with disabilities, as measured by parents, teachers, and the students themselves, as well as on the students’ possible motivation in school?

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The analyses of the capacity scores from the AIR Self-Determination Scale pre- and post-intervention surveys and researcher’s reflection notes show perceived growth of the students’ self-determination skills following their participation in the curriculum. Despite the limited time of the study (i.e. four and a half months) and the fact that statistical analysis of the data from the surveys was not possible due to the small number of participants, data did reveal some changes in students’ self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills. The students demonstrated these skills that they learned during lessons, discussions, and interactions in the group as well as in their self-report survey responses. Specifically, quotes from the students recorded in the current researcher’s reflection notes revealed students’ articulating self-determination vocabulary within lessons and discussing in-depth their thoughts on topics such as perseverance, peer pressure, advocacy, etc. Moreover, the students were observed referring back to the
curriculum unit lessons, making connections between activities and stories, and completing guided assignments to demonstrate self-determination skills or practice using these skills to help internalize their meaning (e.g., students practicing problem-solving scenarios with role-playing, learning about their disability and IEPs, etc.). In addition, observations from the students’ general education teachers during the study also pointed to growth. They noted that the majority of the students asked for help more frequently.

Specific to the AIR Self-Determination Scale, the capacity scores from the parent and teacher surveys indicated that the majority of students had growth in self-determination from pre- to post-intervention. These capacity scores increased from pre- to post-intervention for parent surveys, except for one student’s capacity score staying the same, another student’s capacity score decreasing by 1 point, and another student for whom there was no pre-survey capacity score. The increase in capacity scores for parent surveys that occurred for eight students ranged from 1 point to 9 points. From the pre- to post-intervention teacher surveys, all students’ capacity scores increased, except for one student, which may be related to the previously mentioned challenging behaviors that he began to demonstrate during the time of the study. The increase in capacity scores for teacher surveys that occurred for ten students ranged from 1 point to 15 points, and the decrease in capacity score for one student was 13 points.

For the students’ self-report pre- to post-intervention surveys, the capacity scores were inconsistent with some students showing growth in the capacity score post-intervention and others not showing growth. The increase in capacity scores for student surveys that occurred for seven students ranged from 1 point to 21 points, and the
decrease in capacity scores for four students ranged from 1 point to 16 points. Interestingly, the largest decrease in capacity score for one student from pre- to post-intervention may actually be due to that student potentially being more self-determined, in the sense that for the post-survey, he was more aware of the meaning of the survey and perceived his abilities more accurately to be at various levels, whereas in the pre-survey, he scored himself “perfectly” (i.e., 5 for all responses).

The changes within the raw scores of capacity (“Think,” “Do,” and “Adjust”) for each student were compared to see increases or decreases. Within the subcategories of the capacity scores (i.e. “Think”, “Do”, and “Adjust”), individual raw scores for all the students inconsistently changed (i.e., some increased, others decreased) from pre- to post-intervention surveys for the students, teachers, and parents. Again, this may be due to the fact that the AIR Self-Determination Scale is not sensitive enough to measure small amounts of growth in specific areas in a short amount of time.

Students, parents, and teachers provided responses to prompts about setting goals on the AIR Self-Determination Scale. While these responses did not directly measure growth of students’ self-determination skills, the students’ responses did offer some insight into how the students’ understanding of goal setting changed from pre- to post-intervention. For most students, their goals changed from the pre- to post-survey to be more directly attainable by the student. Yet, another noteworthy finding was that a couple of students could not articulate a personal goal in writing on the pre-survey, but were able to write a goal on the post-survey. This change may be indicative of further
understanding the concept of goal setting that was an outcome of the self-determination curriculum unit.

In reviewing the pre- and post-survey responses from the supplemental questions given to teachers and parents, there were inconsistencies in terms of their perceptions of their child/student demonstrating particular self-determination skills. For example, when asked “In the past two weeks, has your child/student …” for 10 specific self-determination skills/actions, some teachers and parents changed from “no” to “yes” responses from pre- to post-surveys (i.e., indicating that initially the child/student did not exhibit the skill, but then did after the intervention) and other teachers and parents changed from “yes” to “no” responses from pre- to post-surveys (i.e., indicating that initially the child/student did exhibit the skill, but then did not after the intervention). Only one student had all “yes” for responses on the teacher and parent post-survey. Due to the wording on the question, “In the past two weeks, has your child/student…,” the “yes” and “no” responses do not appear to be a sensitive measure of perceived growth from the self-determination curriculum unit. There was space provided for additional comments beyond the “yes/no” responses. While these comments did not give explanations for the “yes/no” answers or clarify the changes in the actual responses between pre- and post-surveys, the statements did provide examples of and observations about students’ behaviors (e.g., “He’s a great kid – his speech impairment holds him back from making friends…”).

The motivation scale was only given to students post-intervention; therefore, it could not measure growth, as there were no pre-intervention motivation scale results to
compare to the post-intervention motivation scale results. Nevertheless, from reviewing the students’ responses to this motivation scale, the students as a whole stated they were more motivated to work harder in school and go to an adult when having a problem. The mean motivation score across all 11 students for both these actions was 1.6 (1 meaning the students strongly agrees that they feel motivated to do the listed action, and a 5 meaning the students strongly disagrees that they feel motivated). The next lowest mean score (i.e. motivated to do) was 1.7 for both setting a goal and participating in class. With a highest mean motivation score of 3 (i.e. do not agree or disagree), the students reported to be less motivated “to do things I love, even if my friends don’t like it.” The students also appeared to be less motivated to ask for help (mean score of 2.4). It should be noted that the majority of the mean scores across students on the motivation scale fell within the range of “strongly agree” and “agree,” which can be interpreted that the students are motivated to do these acts of self-determination.

The current researcher’s reflection notes, though not a direct measure, did provide examples of the student participants demonstrating the understanding of self-determination concepts. Subtle actions, such as asking for resources or help within the group setting were recorded examples of self-determination on an individual level. The reflection notes also provided suggestions to adjustments that could be made in self-determination curriculum, and calls for changes to be made in the future.

With a longer data collection period, results from the various data collection measures utilized in the current study may show more consistent and concrete results to support the efficacy of implementing a self-determination curriculum at the elementary
level for students with disabilities. Nevertheless, as there is a lack of research on self-determination at the elementary level, the current study does contribute to the literature as it provides an additional example of beneficial components of a self-determination curriculum for elementary students with disabilities.

It is noteworthy that findings from the current research do correspond to the research previously discussed in the literature review. For example, Abernathy and Taylor (2009) found that teachers in their study taught self-determination skills through teaching students directly about their disability. In the current study, students learned about disability and identified why they go to the learning center for additional support, creating more opportunities to build their self-awareness skills. Another study by Campbell-Whatley (2008) showed how students could expand their self-awareness skills by learning about their disability and IEPs, using goals, learning about strengths and weaknesses, and problem solving, all examples of lessons portrayed in the current study. Role-playing was a part of each lesson, and the results indicated that there was a significant increase of self-determination skills after this curriculum was complete. In the current study, the researcher also observed the importance that role-play had on the students’ learning key concepts of self-determination.

A third study that taught students directly about their disability helped fifth grade students learn their strengths and changed their negative views on disability (Merlone & Moran, 2008). Similarly, the current study introduced the concept of disability to the students and created positive connections to disability, such as the ability to come to learning center for support. The students in the Merlone and Moran study (2008) learned
how their brain works as well as how to advocate for themselves. Similarly, in the current study, students began to understand why they needed learning center support and to advocate for their needs (i.e., asking for help more frequently).

Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, and Soukup (2013) utilized multiple self-determination curriculum resources, including *Whose Future Is It Anyway?* and the *Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction* over three years, to teach self-determination. Compared to the control group, the students showed growth in their self-determination skills (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm & Soukup, 2013), verifying that these curriculum and tools can be effective for students with disabilities. The current study implemented pieces of the same resources as Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, and Soukup (2013) to supplement the curriculum unit, but did not have a control group or teach the self-determination skills for an extended period of time.

Research also demonstrates that teaching goal setting utilizing the *Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction* can be effective with elementary students as it is with high school students. For example, Palmer and Wehmeyer (2003) used the model to teach elementary students to set goals and they found that these students were successful in and out of school setting either academic goal or social/behavior goal. Students in the current study also used the steps from the *Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction* to learn goal setting, and free response answers on post-intervention surveys indicated that the majority of student participants increased their goal setting skills.
Limitations

Several limitations affected this study. First, the study had a small number of participants at a single school site and there was no control group. Therefore, the scores from the AIR Self-Determination Scale could not be statistically analyzed and the results cannot be generalized to a greater population of students with disabilities. Another limitation was the length of time for the implementation of the lessons. Specifically, each lesson did not always fit in the forty-minute block of time available in the learning center, which extended the timeline for completing the lessons longer and included long breaks between lessons for at least one of the groups (i.e. Group CD) due to the inconsistency of the year-round calendar. As a result, Group AB and Group CD did not experience the curriculum unit in the same way so this may have an impact on the data. In addition, the data collection methods, specifically the AIR Self-Determination Scale, do not appear to be sensitive enough to capture changes in students’ self-determination skills in the relatively short time frame of this study. Lastly, all of the data were based on self-report measures with no actual formal observations of student behavior in the classroom or at home to determine if self-determination behaviors/skills changed in these settings and if the responses by participants (i.e. teachers, parents, and students) reflected actual behavior of students.

As noted above, a logistical issue in the implementation of the curriculum was the time constraints. Many time-related factors may have affected the curriculum, including: short blocks of time available with the student participants, tardiness/absenteeism, year-round calendar, field trips, and minimum days. Group AB
was closer to following the daily lesson plan layout for the entire unit implementation as compared to Group CD because the students were on-time to group, had better attendance, and did not have as many minimum days affecting their group time. To ensure all lessons were taught to both groups, Group CD had longer breaks during their unit due to off-track time, and Group AB had double reading sessions the last week to complete the intervention before the group went off-track. Upon reflection, if lessons were given the allotted time with fewer inhibiting factors, such as teaching the lessons to an entire class or having longer amounts of time, the data collection measures may have detected more change in perceptions of growth resulting from the self-determination unit.

**Reflections on Implementation of Curriculum**

During the implementation of the curriculum for the two student groups, the current researcher wrote reflection notes after each lesson. Much of this data was comprised of quotes from students and examples of students using the self-determination vocabulary or articulating examples of the terms used, but this data also included reflections on the actual curriculum, in particular, on its implementation and modifications made throughout the process of implementation. A summary of these reflections related to implementation will be discussed in the following section.

**Student Behavior and Skills**

At the start of the intervention process, the student groups were newly formed. The group dynamics had not yet been addressed and challenging behaviors by students were present (e.g. shouting out of turn, arguing, etc.). Consequently, behavior support systems (e.g. student-teacher points, individual student behavior charts, etc.) were
initiated to address behavior so the lessons could be taught with little interruption. For Group AB specifically, an incentive for appropriate behaviors was being released for recess on time, as the students went to recess straight from the learning center. A positive behavior support system may need to be embedded into the curriculum unit to address these issues with future implementation.

Due to the timeline needed for the research study, groups were also based on track, (i.e. students on A and B tracks in one group and students on C and D track in the other group), and not by ability level; therefore writing or individual activities (e.g. setting personal goals) were more difficult for the teacher to support with such varying levels of skills. Based on the current researcher’s observations, when pulled individually or in small groups on Fridays for make-up work, the students were more efficient and focused and took more away from the mini lessons then when they were not in the full group of 5-6 students. In addition, within the larger group and when the students had individual work, mostly for self-awareness lessons, students who finished early would be able to complete another independent activity to move ahead, or they would help read questions and worksheets aloud to the students who had more challenges with reading, since the groups were not ability based. This was an important observation of individual students taking initiative to be productive in the learning center and aware of their time.

Another eye-opening activity was the American Sign Language (ASL) perseverance lesson. The researcher expected it to take a long period of time, really push the students to commit to complete it, and possibly result in some challenging behaviors. However, only one student had difficulty and the rest of the students did not think it was
overly difficult. One student already knew the ASL alphabet, so he was able to complete the assignment quickly and with ease.

**Observations of Group Similarities and Differences**

Between the student groups, Group AB seemed to be more engaged in the literature and struggled more with the writing and brainstorming aspects of the terms and activities in the curriculum, but Group CD was more independent and needed some convincing that some of the literature were not “baby books.” These students were told that even if they knew the book from before or if it seemed like a book for a young child, our job was to look at and learn from the message from the story. For example, *Beacon the Bright Little Firefly* seemed like a “baby book” to two students in Group CD, but they appeared to learn about self-advocacy from the book by seeing the main character Beacon stand up to the other fireflies and state that he is unique and did not need to flash his light like the others. One student was even interested enough to research more about fireflies and the start of fireworks to share with the group as additional information. Another student also used the computer for research when he was completing his travel goal artwork from *Oh, The Places You’ll Go* to look up a picture of the Great Wall of China, which reveals a transition of mindset for the student, who came to enjoy the books and not view them as “baby books.”

The difference between Group AB and Group CD discussions were also very eye-opening for the current researcher. Group AB seemed to be scared of getting into trouble and to want to answer questions to impress the teacher. On the other hand, Group CD would frequently side with kids in scenarios who may or may not be making safe choices.
These students did not appear to care as much about getting into trouble in comparison to Group AB students. In addition, Group AB seemed more naïve with their experiences and responses to difficult questions and Group CD appeared to be more mature in their responses to difficult questions. Across both groups, boys would generally make more impulsive decisions in discussions than the girls, especially regarding safety and bullies and friendships (i.e. not wearing a bicycle helmet, wanting to punch a bully, etc.).

**Recommendations for Practice**

An examination of the results of this study has shown the importance and impact of teaching self-determination skills, such as self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting, at the elementary level; specifically, in terms of students being able to learn the terminology and participate in activities to learn the skills. This study can serve to inform the future elementary self-determination lessons and curriculum units, as it has demonstrated a self-determination curriculum that may promote the acquisition of self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting skills using a variety of learning modalities and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1995). The variety of disabilities of the participants and the fact that the curriculum does not focus on specific reading levels, also shows the versatility of the curriculum to meet diverse students’ needs. Most importantly, the self-determination curriculum used in this study is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and can be easily integrated into any classroom using the literature, worksheets, and lessons to teach the skills.

At the current researcher’s school site, the curriculum has already helped a number of students and will help many more in years to come, as the researcher continues
to teach the curriculum unit. Colleagues of the researcher have also begun planning how to use and adapt this specific curriculum for high school populations, in addition to adapting the lessons for students at all levels of ability, including those with moderate to severe disabilities, by adding visual supports and modified text. Classroom teachers of the student participants in the current study also noted how important the focus skills are for their students, and one teacher in particular told the researcher that she would like to focus more on goal setting in her classroom in the future because it is important for all students.

When reflecting on the implementation of the unit as a whole to the two groups, meaningful changes were made to specific activities and lesson to enhance the curriculum. These changes can inform educators who may plan to implement the self-determination curriculum unit as well as future researchers reviewing this study. To that end, these modifications in the curriculum will be discussed in more detail.

In the self-awareness section of the unit, some students struggled to state positive things about themselves, and their peers created a positive response to this situation by stating positive things for their peer when he/she could not. This strategy of peer support could be encouraged more often throughout lessons to build self-esteem and confidence in order for the student to build their self-awareness skills. Also in the self-awareness unit, students were given two learning inventories to discover their learning strengths (i.e. visual, auditory, or kinesthetic). Students in Group CD were able to remember their specific strength, but Group AB needed reminders, so the teacher wrote a sample sentence for each strength from the inventory for the students to copy into their journals.
This adaptation helped students relate to their results better and is recommended for future implementation of the unit.

For the students who chose an accommodation to advocate for from their adaptation plan developed during the unit, they needed frequent reminders and after a few days were given a post-it note to remind them to talk to their teacher about the accommodation they needed in class based on their plan. Even after a conversation saying they would use the note to remember what to say and not just hand the post-it note to their teacher, a few students still handed the post-it note to their teacher instead of verbalizing their needs. In future implementation of the unit, further adaptations may need to be used to support the students to verbally advocate for themselves in their classrooms.

Due to the large amount of extensive writing with complex terms in the self-determination unit, especially in the first half of the unit, a modification that supported all students was to have the students share their brainstorming ideas out loud and the teacher would write them on the board. Then, the students were able to copy the brainstorming notes down or use the ideas they related to or wanted on the particular worksheet. This strategy was more successful and created less frustration for students who needed more one-on-one help with writing, spelling, and brainstorming. Students that read at a lower level in the groups had the option during writing assignments throughout the unit to ask for words to be written on the board to copy down, even if it wasn’t a brainstorming activity as described above. For a few students in Group AB, longer writing worksheets
were modified to approximately half of the sentences required in order to prevent meltdowns and keep these students from being overwhelmed.

In short, these modifications to the curriculum unit can inform educators of changes that can enhance the lessons and also give educators a sense of how they may adapt the lessons to utilize students’ strengths to meet their needs. Clearly, the current study can inform educators on how to incorporate self-determination skills into the elementary level core using literature and multiple learning modalities.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Even though the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the larger population, they do add to the limited research literature on teaching self-determination skills to students with disabilities at the elementary level. As stated previously, the research base does demonstrate the need for and importance of self-determination skills for elementary age students (Stang, Carter, Lane, & Pierson, 2009; Cho, Wehmeyer & Kingston, 2011; 2012) and this study supports these findings.

Further research should be conducted to generalize the current study’s self-determination curriculum to other elementary school settings. A replication of this study may be considered on a traditional calendar to ensure better consistency with lesson implementation and teaching to only one group of students, instead of two groups. An increased number of participants in a replicated study with a control comparison group could possibly generalize results to a larger population of students. In addition, the increased number of participants should be from multiple school sites to have a larger and more diverse population in the study. To extent data measures beyond self-report,
observations can be incorporated into a replicated study to explore if self-determination skills occur in and transfer to the general education classroom and possibly even to the home environment. Finally, a positive behavior support system embedded into the curriculum could also be considered in future studies.

Conclusions

In summary, for the current study, a self-determination curriculum focusing on self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting was developed and implemented with 11 fourth grade students with special needs in a learning center program. The findings indicate that even in a short amount of time, elementary students with disabilities can learn and apply self-determination skills through structured lessons, activities, and literature aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Elementary Self-Determination Curriculum & Lesson Schedule, & Curriculum References

WEEK 1

Day 1
C/D track - Monday 10/26 --- A/B track – Monday 1/4

Goal: Complete pre-test, introduction to self-determination

CCSS – RL.4.2, RL.4.4, RI.4.1, W.4.4

- (25 mins.) AIR Self-Determination Scale Pre-Test - read questions aloud to students
- (5 mins.) Self-Determination brainstorm - What does it mean? (write ideas on the board/write in journals – look up in dictionary for parts of words, etc.)
  - Definition: personal decision to do something or think a certain way
  - Explain this is what we will be working on for next 2 months to get us to be better in school and at home

- (10 mins.) Oh, the Thinks You Can Think! – You can do whatever you put your mind to.
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

Day 2
C/D track - Tuesday 10/27 --- A/B track – Tuesday 1/5

Goal: Introduction to self-awareness; begin listing preferences/interests/dreams

CCSS – RL.4.4, RL.4.7, RI.4.1, W.4.4

- (10 mins.) Self-Awareness intro (part 1 of SD of 4 parts) – brain storm on board/write in journals - definition/ discuss – create and write on foldable
  - Definition: a person’s knowledge of themselves; aware of strengths and what makes them happy
  - Add SD definition from prior day on back of foldable
- (5 mins.) *I Like Me!* Book – need to know yourself to be successful in life – learning about our strengths and areas of need so we can grow and be the best we can be
- (10 mins.) *Whose Future Is It Anyway?* questions page 25-26 – oral – example of things they should/could know about themselves and learn to be awareness of it – beyond favorite color or subject – kids can ask own questions they create
- (15 mins.) Bridge School Activity 2: If I could… worksheet – aware of own choices and preferences – developing dreams – use spelling dictionaries
  (introduce)
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

Day 3
C/D track - Wednesday 10/28 --- A/B track – Wednesday 1/6
Goal: *Find words to describe self and reflect on how they view themselves; distinguish between what they can do and are interested in*
CCSS – RI.4.4, W.4.4
- (15 mins.) Identity Chart – Who I Am? – brainstorm words on board (adjs, nouns, feelings, etc.)
- (15 mins.) T chart: Interests and abilities (*Whose Future...* pg. 29)
  - distinguish between what you like and what you are good at (not always the same) – write in journal and share
- (10 mins.) Bridge School Activity 1: How I See Myself – independent view, not what others say about you – Teacher shares completed sheet “How I See You” after students are done
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:
Day 4
C/D track - Thursday 10/29 --- A/B track – Thursday 1/7
Goal: Become aware of learning strengths and strategies and supports to get them
CCSS – RI.4.4, SL.4.1
  ▪ (20 mins.) Bridge School Activity 4: I Learn Best When… Learning Inventory – learn strengths and areas to grow – read questions aloud as a group before answering (like pre-test) – will score later and share
  ▪ (20 mins.) Bridge School Activity 8: Social Networks – brainstorm as a group - where to get support – if needed: list people in their lives on the board and then add to appropriate ring
  ▪ Teacher Reflection
  ▪ Notes:

WEEK 2
Day 5
C/D track - Monday 11/2 --- A/B track – Monday 11/11
Goal: Students learn about their character traits to see strengths and areas of need; discuss the meaning of various traits and how to improve with real life examples
CCSS – SL.4.1, W.4.4
  ▪ (25 mins.) What Do You Stand For? – pages 7-16 quiz about character and what to work on, walk through as a group
  ▪ (15 mins.) Interpreting what it means from quiz (scoring and what character muscle they need to improve)
  ▪ Teacher Reflection
  ▪ Notes:
Day 6
C/D track - Tuesday 11/3 --- A/B track – Tuesday 1/12

Goal: Finding words and images to depict self to display in creative way; finding celebrity similar to self to view as role model

CCSS – RI.4.7, SL.4.5

- (30 mins.) Bridge School Activity 5: I Am Like... collage (magazines cut out magazine words and pictures – draw or create with own paper) about self – independent activity after introduced
- (10 mins.) Print celebrity from computer (cast from a show or band) – write adjectives about each character – pick one most similar to self. – working one-on-one with teacher to pick image to print and adjectives for each individual before choosing one
  - Pre-teach this activity before introducing collage. Come up with some adjectives on board as a reference. Use rewards synonym dictionary.

- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

Day 7
C/D track - Wednesday 11/4 --- A/B track – Wednesday 1/13

Goal: Reflect on collages; be yourself and being different is okay; discover what you can and cannot change about yourself

CCSS – SL.4.5, RL.4.1, RI.4.2, W.4.4

- (10 mins.) Finish “I Am Like” and/or collage projects as needed
- (15 mins.) Ferdinand the Bull – it’s okay to be different discussion – how they relate to Ferdinand.
- (15 mins.) Whose Future...? Page 49 – Things you can and cannot change discussion (list own examples in journal)

- Teacher Reflection
- Notes:
Day 8
C/D track - Thursday 11/5 --- A/B track – Thursday 1/14

Goal: Survey to create more concrete list of preferences and feelings about specific topics; finish up self-awareness

CCSS – SL.4.2, SL.4.4

- (25 mins.) Bridge School Activity 7: Framing A Future quiz – survey to discover more preferences and feelings on various topics – what is and isn’t important to them; discuss when complete
- (15 mins) Review Learning Inventory results for each student and how they are similar and different and what their strengths are. Review suggestions sheet. – brief because more in depth next week
- Teacher Reflection
- Notes:

WEEK 3
Day 9
C/D track - Monday 11/9 --- A/B track – Tuesday 1/19

Goal: Introduce self-advocacy and develop examples to understand concept

CCSS – RL.4.2, RL.4.4

- (10 mins.) Self-Advocacy – brainstorm on board/journals; definition/discuss – add to foldable
  - Definition: learning how to stand up for yourself and get what you need to be successful
- (30 mins.) Bridge School Activity 4 continued (refer back to it)… Learning strategies – what you’re strengths are, how to ask for that in school or home – come up with examples and practice asking for it – list on board
  - expanding on what they learned specific to self – write list of specific examples of what they should ask for in school (e.g. oral instructions, pictures, etc.) write in journal/ role play asking teacher
Day 10

C/D track - Tuesday 11/10 --- A/B track – Wednesday 1/20

Goal: Understanding that being unique is okay; how to keep your integrity in tough situations and stand up for yourself

CCSS – RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RI.4.1, SL.4.2

- (30 mins.) Beacon the Bright Little Firefly: Integrity lesson – discussion questions, refer back to magazine collages/ Unique me! – each student shares and state one thing they have that is unique and/or state about peers one unique thing about them
- (10 mins.) If time – start discussion on peer pressure (conforming and not being okay with being unique)
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

Day 11

C/D track - Thursday 11/12 --- A/B track – Thursday 1/21

Goal: Learn what to do with real life peer pressure situations; how to say no

CCSS – SL.4.1, SL.4.2

- (10 mins.) Continue peer pressure discussion – examples in their lives
- (30 mins.) How to Say no slogan (Beacon/integrity lesson) and make poster/note card and share with group. Role play peer pressure situations and use “no” slogans.
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:
WEEK 4

Day 12
C/D track - Monday 11/16 --- A/B track – Monday 1/25

Goal: Learn about respect and how to it connects to asking for what you need; dealing with bullies by advocating for yourself

CCSS – SL.4.1, SL.4.4, W.4.4

- (25 mins.) *What Do You Stand For?* – page 110-113 Respect – use headings for discuss/brainstorm how to advocate for these areas (self, others, differences, property, laws, living things) – page 116 – scenarios to practice “What If”

- (15 mins.) *Stick Up for Yourself*: page 82-84 Dealing with bullies – students share experiences or define bullying and bullies (brief); read statements #1-3; discuss types of bullying (Physical, emotional, verbal) – write in journals; what to do and not to do

- Teacher reflection

- Notes:

Day 13

C/D track - Tuesday 11/17 --- A/B track – Tuesday 1/26

Goal: Acknowledge feelings and learn what to do when they happen

CCSS – SL.4.5, W.4.4, RL.4.3

- (20 mins.) *Stick Up for Yourself*: page 64-71 Dealing with strong feelings – discuss feelings hard to deal with – list on board, list in journal ones that affect them (in-school - frustration, anger, sadness because learning is hard), refer to feeling vocab pages 25-44 and what to do (64-71) for emotions mentioned; come up with ways to advocate for what you need when have these feelings

- (20 mins.) Draw comic strip – strong feeling > advocate > end result feeling / feelings faces page – show what you look like with these feelings, or list words

- Teacher Reflections

- Notes:
Day 14
C/D track - Wednesday 11/18  ---  A/B track – Wednesday 1/27

Goal: Learn personal accommodations/modifications and how to ask for them; in control of own behaviors (like advocating)

CCSS – SL.4.3, W.4.4, SL.4.6

- (15 mins.) Stick Up for Yourself: page 2-3 definitions – read kid examples and ask what they need to do; then read pg. 3 “stick up for yourself” definitions, page 10, 14, 16 responsible for own behaviors with choices – write in “I” statements in journals “I am responsible for my own behaviors”… etc., solutions to example problems at beginning page 108-110

- (25 mins.) Advocate for accommodations (adaptation plans) – student gets personal copy and review with teacher, what do they mean, what do they look like in the classroom, what do they ask for – practice and ask questions to understand

- Teacher reflection

- Notes:

Day 15
C/D track - Thursday 11/19  ---  A/B track – Thursday 1/28

Goal: Problem-solving

CCSS – SL.4.2, W.4.4, RI.4.7

- (10 mins.) What Do You Stand For?: page 45 – steps to talk out a problem – write steps in journal, discuss simple example to walk through steps

- (30 mins.) Bridge School Unit 2, Activity 3: role play problem situations using steps above (put steps on board as visual) – use situations volunteered from students or in activity list, kids role play but also get suggestions from peers if stuck

- Teacher reflection

- Notes:
WEEK 5

Day 16

C/D track - Monday 11/30 --- A/B track – Tuesday 2/9

Goal: Introduce choice-making and practice with scenarios; connecting dream job to making a choice for the future

CCSS – RI.4.7, W.4.4, SL.4.4

- (5 mins.) Choice-making – define/discuss – brainstorm on board/journals, put in foldable (refer to previous day activities)
  - Definition: making a decision on your own

- (15 mins.) What Would You Do? – Tricky Situations: discussion of choices and what to do, no wrong answers

- (20 mins.) When I Grow Up: read and discuss how growing up is a choice and you can do anything you put your mind to – When I Grow Up writing – you can be anything you want to be

- Teacher reflection

- Notes:

Day 17

C/D track - Tuesday 12/1 --- A/B track – Wednesday 2/10

Goal: Learning that perseverance is a choice to do your best

CCSS – RL.4.2, RL.4.1, SL.4.4

- (40 mins.) The Little Engine That Could: perseverance lesson plan – discussion questions, draw picture of hardest thing they have ever done, in journal listing what to do with a difficult task, act out task and how to overcome or use examples on lesson plan to act out.

- Teacher reflection

- Notes:
Day 18
C/D track - Wednesday 12/2 --- A/B track – Thursday 2/11
Goal: Learning how to make an informed choice; how your choices affect others
CCSS – RL.4.2, W.4.4, SL.4.1
  ▪ (25 mins.) *What Do You Stand For?:* pg. 125 – making choices example read aloud – get student initial thoughts; pg. 127 - steps to make an informed choice (write in journal and on board); pg. 130 – practice examples and act out “What If” discussion; choices log in journal pg. 132 – thing of last few days an choices made (big or little/good or bad); write: what happened, right choice?, easy or hard choice, how did you feel, what did you learn? – leave blank pages to add to later if kids want to
  ▪ (15 mins.) *Jamaica’s Find:* how your choices affect others – use model for what she should have done discussion
  ▪ Teacher reflection
  ▪ Notes:

Day 19
C/D track - Thursday 12/3 --- A/B track – Tuesday 2/16
Goal: Awareness of decision making and how to problem solve; more choice making practice
CCSS – SL.4.3, SL.4.4, W.4.4
  ▪ (25 mins.) *Life Skills Training*: Making Decisions worksheet – listing and who makes the decisions for each example, problem-solving how to make a tough decision with steps
  ▪ (15 mins.) *If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?:* read aloud situations – what is “right”? Discussion of possible differing answers.
  ▪ Teacher reflection
  ▪ Notes:
WEEK 6

Day 20

C/D track - Monday 12/7 --- A/B track – Wednesday 2/17

Goal: Even when your path changes, you can choose how to overcome obstacles; choice making about being safe (real life scenarios)

CCSS – RI.4.7, , RI.4.1, W.4.4

- (20 mins.) I Knew You Could!: how you choose your own path and it changes over time because of obstacles, need to ask for help, and enjoy life!
- (20 mins.) What Do You Stand For?: Safe choice making – pg. 141, discuss instincts and what is and isn’t safe, guidelines discussion and write steps in journal pg. 144, pg. 145 “What If” examples
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

Day 21

C/D track - Tuesday 12/8 --- A/B track – Thursday 2/18

Goal: Be inspired to make choices to reach goals

CCSS – RL.4.1, RI.4.2, SL.4.5

- (40 mins.) Oh, the Places You’ll Go!: control in your life, but bumps in the road to overcome
  - Dr. Seuss quotes and lesson questions; draw a place they want to go (literally or goal), and how to reach it – decorate. Can be in a balloon like in book or in thought bubble too.
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:
Day 22
C/D track - Wednesday 12/9 --- A/B track – Monday 2/22

Goal: Introduce goal setting; don’t have to know everything right now, so small goals are fine

CCSS – RL.4.4, RL.4.7, RI.4.1, W.4.4

- (5 mins.) Goal setting: define and discuss, brainstorm on board/journal – put in foldable
  - Definition: something you wish to do and will work for/towards

- (20 mins.) The OK Book: trying new things is good and you won’t always be the best – OK questions, create art or sentences of what they are OK at and share

- (15 mins.) Refer to I Knew I Could book as a way to set a goal – kids come up with relationship between goals and the book- discussion about connection between perseverance (define in journal) and goal setting – Thomas Edison quote and ASL activity to represent perseverance

- Teacher reflection

- Notes:

Day 23
C/D track - Thursday 12/10 --- A/B track – Tuesday 2/23

Goal: Goals don’t have to be small; learning how to set a goals with steps to reach it; IEP goal awareness

CCSS – RL.4.2, RI.4.8, W.4.4, SL.4.1

- (10 mins.) Dream Big, Little Pig: don’t give up and try new things , dream sheet with list of examples to reference

- (30 mins.) Bridge School Activity 5 (unit 2) – Mountain goal setting: draw mountain on a sheet of paper – each set is sub goal (how to get there in easy steps) and top is main goal
  - Discuss examples of reasonable goals first as group
- (5 mins. each) While working on this – individual teacher meeting about IEP goals (IEP at a glance) and adaptation sheets (review) – preface with these goals are why we come to LC and what we are working on – see how they feel they are doing on them
  - Teacher reflection
  - Notes:

Day 24
C/D track - Friday 12/11 --- A/B track – Wednesday 2/24
Goal: Setting a learning goal; learning about responsibility
CCSS – SL.4.1, W.4.4
- (25 mins.) Bridge School Activity 4 (unit 2) Making A Plan activity (online) – one-on-one with teacher to set goal and print goal sheet – pre set up on computer
  - (independent) While online activity – responsibility sheet: how to set a goal to be better or have more responsibilities as get older
- (15 mins.) Think Big: need support and planning to reach a big goal - discuss
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

WEEK 7
Day 25
C/D track - Monday 12/14 --- A/B track – Thursday 2/25
Goal: Find their “difference” and how to improve or embrace it; learn about and discuss disability
CCSS – RL.4.1, RL.4.4, W.4.4, SL.4.3
- (25 mins.) Giraffes Can’t Dance: integrity lesson – discussion questions, list something they can be better at that they will need to overcome in life – strategies to get better in journal, ignore negatives and dance to “own song” (refer back to unique me collages)
- (15 mins.) *Whose Future Is It Anyway?:* Ask questions (pg. 38) on thoughts of disabilities; pg. 46 – celebrities with disabilities – oral questions and light discussion on student thoughts and what they already know
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

**Day 26**

C/D track - Tuesday 12/15 --- A/B track – Monday 2/29

**Goal:** *Learning that everyone has strengths and areas to grow in, even bullies*

CCSS – RL.4.1, RI.4.2, W.4.4, SL.4.4

- (30 mins.) *Everyone Has Something:* predictions, read and ask questions from packet as go along; individual character questions discussion; T-chart – something good/something to improve on in journal
- (10 mins.) *Bully poem:* back of book – discuss bullies and if they have “something”
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:

**Day 27**

C/D track - Wednesday 12/16 --- A/B track – Tuesday 3/1

**Goal:** *Understanding why they come to Learning Center*

CCSS – RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RI.4.4, W.4.4

- (40 mins.) *How I Learn:* read and ask questions from “Note to Professionals” in back as go along, LD = learning difference and why we come to LC, make list of strategies to try from book characters and when to use them in journal, which character relates to student? Why?
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:
Day 28
C/D track - Thursday 12/17 --- A/B track – Wednesday 3/2

Goal: Reflecting on limitations and what supports they can use to help themselves; feedback

CCSS – RI.4.7, W.4.4

- (15 mins.) *Whose Future Is It Anyway?:* pg. 56-58 (pg. 17 worksheet) good pairing → limitations and supports (related to school/ why they come to LC) – worksheet to complete pg. 61
- *(If Time) Stick Up For Yourself!: Dreams list pg. 46, happiness list pg. 87, I Did It list pg. 100*
- (25 mins.) AIR Self-Determination Scale Post-test
- Student feedback: Review specific things we covered then: what did they like or dislike/what more or less of (teacher writes down)
- Teacher reflection
- Notes:
Curriculum References


Appendix B

Consent to Participate

INFORMED CONSENT
Parent/Legal Guardian

SELF-DETERMINATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: LEARNING SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-ADVOCACY, CHOICE MAKING, AND GOAL SETTING

Your child is invited to participate in a research study which will involve learning self-determination skills in the Learning Center. My name is Katie Coyne, and I am a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento, in the College of Education. I am also a Resource Specialist in the Prairie Learning Center. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because of the opportunity to gain more knowledge about his or herself and how he or she learns.

The purpose of this research is to teach students about their learning style/disability, as well as gaining self-awareness and self-advocacy skills. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she will be asked to participate in lessons in the Learning Center four times a week and complete work about themselves. His or her participation in this study will last through the first half of the school year. This study connects directly to their reading goals on their IEP and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Your participation is also recommended. You will be asked to fill out a survey about your child at the beginning and end of the study to measure if his or her self-determination skills increase.

There are some benefits for your child to participate in this research, particularly that he or she will gain life skills to be able to advocate for their needs and be aware of how they learn in order to be successful in school. You will also learn how your child learn’s best to help him or her in school.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at (916) 422-1843, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jean Gonsier-Gerdin at (916) 278-4619. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in a research project please call the Office of Research Affairs, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-5674, or email irb@csus.edu.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. A measure to insure your child’s anonymity is the use of pseudonyms. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years from when the study is completed.
Your child’s participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to allow him or her to participate will involve no penalty or loss of instruction to which he or she is otherwise entitled. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to discontinue his or her participation at any time without penalty or loss of instruction to which he or she is otherwise entitled. If your child does not participate in the study, he or she will still attend a reading group in the Learning Center to meet their needs and work towards their IEP goals.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to your child’s participation, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your child’s participation at any time without penalty or loss of instruction to which he or she is otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Child’s Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date
I am interested in learning how kids in the Learning Center learn in school. I would like you to join my reading group to learn about how you learn and how to be the best student you can be. We will learn about self-awareness (learning about yourself), self-advocacy (telling people what you need), making choices, and setting goals. This will happen four times a week for the first half of the school year. You can stop coming to my reading group at any time and join another reading group in the Learning Center instead.

If you want to stop, just tell me. You won't get in trouble. In fact, if you don't want to be in my reading group, you don't have to. You can always join a different reading group. Also, if you have any questions about what you'll be doing, or if you can't decide whether to do it or not, just ask me if there is anything you'd like me to explain. I will keep everything confidential, which means I will not use your name anywhere in my project.

If you do want to participate, please sign your name on the line below. Your parent has already told us that it is alright with them if you want to be in the reading group. Remember, you don't have to, and once you start you can stop whenever you like, and join a different group.

Signed: __________________________

Date:______________
INFORMED CONSENT
Teacher – Student with Learning Disability
SELF-DETERMINATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: LEARNING SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-ADVOCACY, CHOICE MAKING, AND GOAL SETTING

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve one or more of your students learning self-determination skills in the Learning Center. My name is Katie Coyne, and I am a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento, in the College of Education. I am also a Resource Specialist in the Prairie Learning Center. Your student was selected as a possible participant in this study because of the opportunity to gain more knowledge about his or herself and how he or she learns.

The purpose of this research is to teach students about their learning style/disability, as well as gaining self-awareness and self-advocacy skills. If your student participates, he or she will be asked to participate in lessons in the Learning Center four times a week and complete work about themselves. His or her participation in this study will last through the first half of the school year. Your participation is also recommended. You will be asked to fill out a survey about your student(s) at the beginning and end of the study to measure if his or her self-determination skills increase.

There is no personal benefit for you to participate in this research, but it will help the researcher learn more about the students’ growth using self-determination skills in order to be successful in school.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at (916) 422-1843, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jean Gonsier-Gerdin at (916) 278-4619. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in a research project please call the Office of Research Affairs, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-5674, or email irb@csus.edu.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your name or student will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. A measure to insure your anonymity is the use of pseudonyms. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years from when the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation at any time without penalty, that
you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

________________________
Teacher Printed Name

________________________
Student Name(s)

________________________
Teacher Signature

________________________
Date
Appendix C

Assessments Used for Data Collection

Assessment Explanation and Supplemental Questions

- The **pre-test** will consist of the entire AIR scale for all participants (educators, parents, and students) to create a profile for the student. The supplement questions will also be asked for the parents and educators.

- The **post-test** will only use a portion of the AIR scale (see below), to ensure the scale is measuring the areas of self-awareness, self-advocacy, choice making, and goal setting, in addition to the supplemental questions.
  - The educators will only fill out the following pages of the AIR scale: Knowledge of Self-Determination Behaviors, Ability to Perform Self-Determination Behaviors, Perception of Knowledge and Ability to Perform Self-Determination Behaviors, and the free response page at the end of the packet.
  - The parents will only fill out the following pages of the AIR scale: Things My Child Does and free response page at the end of the packet.
  - The students will only fill out the following pages of the AIR scale: Things I Do, How I Feel, and the free response page at the end of the packet.

In addition to the modified AIR scale, supplemental questions will be provided for the parents and educators (see below).
AIR Self-Determination Scale

EDUCATOR FORM

Student’s Name ___________________________ Date __________________

Date of Birth (or age) ____________________ Grade ____________ □ Female □ Male

Educator’s Name __________________________

School Name ____________________________

HOW TO FILL OUT THIS FORM

Each page of this form lists characteristics and behaviors that indicate the degree to which your student demonstrates traits of self-determination and the degree to which the people influencing your student provides opportunities that foster self-determination. For each item, select the appropriate rating code based on what you have observed about your student. An example is provided to illustrate each characteristic. Feel free to write in a different example that supports your rating for your student.

Here is an example of how you should mark your answers.

EXAMPLE QUESTION:
Student checks for errors after completing a project.

EXAMPLE ANSWER:
Check the box of the rating code which tells what your student is most like:
(Check ONLY ONE box per question).

1 Never…………………… student never checks for errors.
2 Almost Never………… student almost never checks for errors.
3 Sometimes……………… student sometimes checks for errors.
4 Almost Always………… student almost always checks for errors.
5 Always…………………… student always checks for errors.

©The AIR Self-Determination Scale was developed by the American Institute for Research (AIR), in collaboration with Teachers College, Columbia University, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under cooperative agreement H023J200005.
## KNOWLEDGE of Self-Determination Behaviors

1. **Student knows own abilities and limitations.**
   *Example:* James can identify his personal strengths and talents, such as his musical ability as well as areas in which he needs improvement, like his below average math problem-solving skills.

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2. **Student knows how to set expectations and goals that satisfy own interests and needs.**
   *Example:* Lee wants to attend college and knows that to get good grades, she needs to work hard on her assignments and complete them on time.

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3. **Student knows how to make choices, decisions, and plans to meet own goals and expectations.**
   *Example:* When making plans to meet her goals, Lynn knows how to identify various strategies, weigh the pros and cons, and follow through.

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4. **Student knows how to take actions to complete own plans successfully.**
   *Example:* Kenneth knows how to follow through on a scheduled plan to complete his work accurately and on time.

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5. **Student knows how to evaluate results of actions to determine what was effective.**
   *Example:* Germaine knows what questions to ask to find out how well she is doing.

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6. **Student knows how to change actions or plans to meet goals and satisfy needs and wants.**
   *Example:* Joe understands that to get an A in math, he may need to study one hour every night; if that doesn’t work, he may have to work two hours every night; and if that doesn’t work, he may have to learn to study more effectively.

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2 AIR Self Determination Scale, Educator Form
### ABILITY to Perform Self-Determination Behaviors

1. **Student expresses own interests, needs, and abilities.**
   - *Example:* Sarah communicates her athletic interest and talent in conversations, written journals, or participation in sports activities.

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2. **Student sets expectations and goals that will satisfy own interests needs, and wants.**
   - *Example:* Loving to spend time drawing and doing art, Daniel sets the goal of finding art classes that he can take after school once a week.

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Ability Total: Items 1+2

3. **Student knows how to make choices, decisions, and plans to meet own goals and expectations.**
   - *Example:* Anna weighed the pros and cons of doing three types of history projects, chose to write a research report, outlined the report, and made a schedule for completing the report on time.

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Ability Total: Items 3+4

4. **Student initiates actions on own choices and plans.**
   - *Example:* Ming begins work right away each time he gets an assignment or is asked by someone to help with a project.

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Ability Total: Items 5+6

5. **Student gathers information on results of actions.**
   - *Example:* After completing her work, Theresa checks it for errors and asks others to look it over and make suggestions.

6. **Student changes own actions or plans to satisfy expectations and goals, if necessary.**
   - *Example:* Ricardo tries different approaches to solve problems and to complete tasks that are difficult for him.
**PERCEPTION of Knowledge and Ability to Perform**  
Self-Determination Behaviors

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| 1. Student feels free to express own needs, interests, and abilities, even when facing opposition from others.  
*Example:* Fran defends her needs and interests to anyone who questions them. |
|   | 1     | 2            | 3         | 4             | 5      |
| 2. Student feels free to set own goals and expectations, even if they are different from the expectations others have for the student.  
*Example:* Trevor does not feel constrained by others’ opinions in setting goals and expectations for himself. |
|   | 1     | 2            | 3         | 4             | 5      |

**Perception Total: Items 1+2**

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| 3. Student feels free to make own choices, decisions, and plans to meet own goals and expectations.  
*Example:* Corine often considers her parents’ suggestions when making choices and plans, but the final plans taken to meet her goals are her own. |
|   | 1     | 2            | 3         | 4             | 5      |

**Perception Total: Items 3+4**

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| 4. Student feels confident about being able to successfully complete own plans.  
*Example:* When Nicholas schedules his own activities, he is confident he can complete them accurately and on time. |
|   | 1     | 2            | 3         | 4             | 5      |

**Perception Total: Items 5+6**

Please go on to the next page→
## OPPORTUNITY To Perform Self-Determination Behaviors AT SCHOOL

1. **Student has opportunities at school to explore, express, and feel good about own needs, interests, and abilities.**
   - *Example:* Christine’s teachers encourage her to talk about her athletic interests and abilities and about what sports activities she wants to do.

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2. **Student has opportunities at school to identify goals and expectations that will meet his or her needs, interests, and abilities; to set these goals; and to feel good about them.**
   - *Example:* Troy’s teachers let him know that he is responsible for setting his own goals to get his needs and wants met.

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3. **Student has opportunities at school to learn about making choices and plans, to make them, and to feel good about them.**
   - *Example:* Shebra’s teachers allow her to make her own choices and plans for school assignments, family chores, and leisure activities.

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4. **Student has opportunities at school to initiate actions to meet expectations and goals.**
   - *Example:* Manuel’s teachers tell him that he is responsible for scheduling study time and for handing in assignments on time.

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5. **Student has opportunities at school to get results of actions taken to meet own plans.**
   - *Example:* Michelle’s teachers are available to give feedback on projects whenever she needs it.

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Student has opportunities at school to change actions and plans to satisfy own expectations.**
   - *Example:* Laurent’s teacher encouraged him to take his time and to revise his work as often as necessary to satisfy his own expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Please go on to the next page→

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5 AIR Self Determination Scale, Educator Form
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITY To Perform Self-Determination Behaviors AT HOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student has opportunities at home to explore, express, and feel good about own needs, interests, and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Maria’s parents encourage her to talk about her athletic interests and abilities and about what sports activities she wants to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student has opportunities at home to identify goals and expectations that will meet his or her needs, interests, and abilities; to set these goals; and to feel good about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Roberto’s parents let him know that he is responsible for setting his own goals to get his needs and wants met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity at Home Total: Items 1+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student has opportunities at home to learn about making choices and plans, to make them, and to feel good about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Kelly’s parents allow her to make her own choices and plans for school assignments, family chores, and leisure activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Student has opportunities at home to initiate actions to meet expectations and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Anthony’s parents tell him that he is responsible for scheduling study time and for handing in assignments on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity at Home Total: Items 3+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Student has opportunities at home to get results of actions taken to meet own plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Thy’s parents are available to give feedback on projects whenever she needs it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student has opportunities at home to change actions and plans to satisfy own expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Stacy’s parents encourage him to take his time and to revise his work as often as necessary to satisfy his own expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity at Home Total: Items 5+6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please go on to the next page→

6  AIR Self Determination Scale, Educator Form
PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN THE SPACES BELOW.

Give an example of a goal the student is working on.

What is the student doing to reach this goal?

How is the student doing in reaching this goal?

Thank you.
The AIR Self-Determination Profile
Educator Form

Knowledge

Ability

Perception

Capacity

Opportunity at School

Opportunity at Home

Level of Self-Determination

Student Name _________________________ Date _________________________

(Write sum in box and mark in column)
AIR Self-Determination Scale®

PARENT FORM

Student’s Name ________________________________________________

Date __________________________________________________________

School Name____________________________________________________

Parent’s Name__________________________________________________

HOW TO FILL OUT THIS FORM

Please answer these questions about how your child goes about getting what he or she wants or needs. This may occur at school, or after school, or it could be related to your child’s friends, other family members, a job or hobby.

This is not a Test. There are no right or wrong answers. The questions will help us learn about your child’s strengths and areas where your child may need help.

Goal

A goal is something your child wants to get or achieve, either now or next week or in the distant future. Your child can have many different kinds of goals. Your child could have a goal that has to do with school (like getting a good grade on a test or graduating from high school). Your child could have a goal that has to do with getting along better with friends or family (like making his mom proud). Your child could have a goal of saving money to buy something (a new iPod® or new sneakers), or doing better in sports (getting on the basketball team). Each child’s goals are different because each person has different things that they want or need or that they are good at.

Plan

A plan is the way your child decides to meet his or her goal, or the steps your child needs to take in order to get what (s)he wants or needs. Like goals, your child can have many different kinds of plans. An example of a plan to meet the goal of getting on the basketball team would be: to get better by shooting more baskets at home after school, to play basketball with friends on the weekend, to listen to the coach when the team practices, and to watch the pros play basketball on TV.

The AIR Self-Determination Scale was developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with Teachers College, Columbia University, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement HO231200005.
HOW TO MARK YOUR ANSWERS

EXAMPLE QUESTION

After completing a project, my child checks for errors.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

Circle the number of the answer that tells what your child is most like.

Circle ONLY ONE number.

1. Never………………My child never checks for errors after completing a project.
2. Almost Never…..My child almost never checks for errors after completing a project.
4. Almost Always….My child almost always checks for errors after completing a project.
5. Always……………. My child always checks for errors after completing a project.

REMEMBER

| There are NO right or wrong answers. | This will not affect your child’s grade. So please think about each question carefully before you circle your answer. |

2 AIR Self Determination Scale, Parent Form
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things My Child Does</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My child knows what (s)he needs, likes, and is good at.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My child sets his or her own goals to satisfy wants or needs. (S)he thinks about his or her own abilities when setting goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does – Total Items 1 + 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My child figures out how to meet goals alone. (S)he makes plans and decides what to do independently.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My child begins work on plans to meet his or her goals as soon as possible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does – Total Items 3 + 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My child checks his or her own progress when completing his or her plan. (S)he asks others what they think of his or her progress.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If my plan doesn’t work, my child tries another one to meet my goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things My Child Does – Total Items 5 + 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please go on to the next page ⇒

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3 AIR Self Determination Scale, Parent Form
## WHAT HAPPENS AT HOME

1. At home, people listen when my child talks about what (s)he wants and is good at.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. At home, people let my child know that (s)he can set his or her own goals to get what (s)he wants or needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What Happens at School – Total Items 1 + 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. At home, my child has learned how to make plans to meet his or her own goals and to feel good about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. At home, my child is allowed to act on his or her plans right away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What Happens at School – Total Items 3 + 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. At home, my child has someone to tell him or her when (s)he is meeting his or her own goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. At home, people understand my child when (s)he has to change plans to meet his or her own goals. They offer advice and encouragement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What Happens at School – Total Items 5 + 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 AIR Self Determination Scale, Parent Form

Please go on to the next page ➔
### WHAT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL

1. **At school, people listen when my child talks about what (s)he wants and is good at.**

   - Never: 1
   - Almost Never: 2
   - Sometimes: 3
   - Almost Always: 4
   - Always: 5

2. **At school, people let my child know that (s)he can set his or her own goals to get what (s)he wants or needs.**

   - Never: 1
   - Almost Never: 2
   - Sometimes: 3
   - Almost Always: 4
   - Always: 5

**What Happens at School – Total Items 1 + 2**

3. **At school, my child has learned how to make plans to meet his or her own goals and to feel good about them.**

   - Never: 1
   - Almost Never: 2
   - Sometimes: 3
   - Almost Always: 4
   - Always: 5

4. **At school, my child is allowed to act on his or her plans right away.**

   - Never: 1
   - Almost Never: 2
   - Sometimes: 3
   - Almost Always: 4
   - Always: 5

**What Happens at School – Total Items 3 + 4**

5. **At school, my child has someone to tell him or her when (s)he is meeting his or her own goals.**

   - Never: 1
   - Almost Never: 2
   - Sometimes: 3
   - Almost Always: 4
   - Always: 5

6. **At school, people understand my child when (s)he has to change plans to meet his or her own goals. They offer advice and encouragement.**

   - Never: 1
   - Almost Never: 2
   - Sometimes: 3
   - Almost Always: 4
   - Always: 5

**What Happens at School – Total Items 5 + 6**

---

5 AIR Self Determination Scale, Parent Form
PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS...

Give an example of a goal your child is working on now.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What is your child doing to reach this goal?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How is your child doing in reaching this goal?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU!

The AIR Self-Determination Scale was developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with Teachers College, Columbia University, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement H023M2000.
The AIR Self-Determination Profile
Parent Form

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Items</th>
<th>Think</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Adjust</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total

- Things My Child Does
- What Happens at Home
- What Happens at School

Level of Self-Determination

(Write sum in box and mark column)

Student's Name: _____________________________ Date: ________________

7 AIR Self Determination Scale, Parent Form
AIR Self-Determination Scale®

STUDENT FORM

Student’s Name ___________________________ Date__________

School Name________________________________ Your Grade__________

Your Date of Birth__________________________ Month Day Year

HOW TO FILL OUT THIS FORM

Please answer these questions about how you go about getting what you want or need. This may occur at school, or after school, or it could be related to your friends, your family, or a job or hobby you have.

This is not a Test. There are no right or wrong answers. The questions will help you learn about what you do well and where you may need help.

Goal

You may not be sure what some of the words in the questions mean. For example, the word goal is used a lot. A goal is something you want to get or achieve, either now or next week or in the distant future, like when you are an adult. You can have many different kinds of goals. You could have a goal that has to do with school (like getting a good grade on a test or graduating from high school). You could have a goal of saving money to buy something (a new iPod® or new sneakers), or doing better in sports (getting on the basketball team). Each person’s goals are different because each person has different things that they want or need or that they are good at.

Plan

Another word that is used in some of the questions is plan. A plan is the way you decide to meet your goal, or the steps you need to take in order to get what you want or need. Like goals, you can have many different kinds of plans. An example of a plan to meet the goal of getting on the basketball team would be: to get better by shooting more baskets at home after school, to play basketball with friends on the weekend, to listen to the coach when the team practices, and to watch the pros play basketball on TV.

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1 AIR Self-Determination Scale, Student Form
HOW TO MARK YOUR ANSWERS

EXAMPLE QUESTION:
I check for errors after completing a project.

EXAMPLE ANSWER:
Circle the number of the answer which tells what you are most like:
(Circle ONLY ONE number).

1 Never...................................student never checks for errors.
2 Almost Never........................student almost never checks for errors.
3 Sometimes............................student sometimes checks for errors.
4 Almost Always.......................student almost always checks for errors.
5 Always................................ student always checks for errors.

REMEMBER

| There are NO right or wrong answers. | This will not affect your grade. So please think about each question carefully before you circle your answer. |

2 AIR Self-Determination Scale, Student Form
## THINGS I DO

1. I know what I need, what I like, and what I’m good at.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I set goals to get what I want or need. I think about what I am good at when I do this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Things I Do – Total Items 1 + 2**

3. I figure out how to meet my goals. I make plans and decide what I should do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I begin working on my plans to meet my goals as soon as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Things I Do – Total Items 3 + 4**

5. I check how I’m doing when I’m working on my plan. If I need to, I ask others what they think of how I’m doing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. If my plan doesn’t work, I try another one to meet my goals.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Things I Do – Total Items 5 + 6**

---

3. *AIR Self Determination Scale, Student Form*
### HOW I FEEL

1. I feel good about what I like, what I want, and what I need to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I believe that I can set goals to get what I want.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **How I Feel – Total Items 1 + 2**

3. I like to make plans to meet my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I like to begin working on my plans right away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **How I Feel – Total Items 3 + 4**

5. I like to check on how well I’m doing in meeting my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. I am willing to try another way if it helps me to meet my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **How I Feel – Total Items 5 + 6**

---

4. AIR Self Determination Scale, Student Form

Please go on to the next page ➔
WHAT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL

1. People at school listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I’m good at.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. People at school let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Happens at School — Total Items 1 + 2

3. At school, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. People at school encourage me to start working on my plans right away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Happens at School — Total Items 3 + 4

5. I have someone at school who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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6. People at school understand when I have to change my plan to meet my goals. They offer advice and encourage me when I’m doing this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Happens at School — Total Items 5 + 6

Please go on to the next page ⇒

5 ADIR Self Determination Scale, Student Form
### WHAT HAPPENS AT HOME

1. People at home listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I’m good at.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
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### What Happens at Home – Total Items 1 + 2

3. At home, I have learned how to make plans to meet my goals and to feel good about them.

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<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

### What Happens at Home – Total Items 3 + 4

5. I have someone at home who can tell me if I am meeting my goals.

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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What Happens at Home – Total Items 5 + 6

Please go on to the next page ➔

---

6 *AIR Self Determination Scale, Student Form*
PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS...

Give an example of a goal you are working on.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What are you doing to reach this goal?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How well are you doing in reaching this goal?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU!

7 AIR Self Determination Scale, Student Form
Supplemental Questions for Parent and Teacher

Supplemental Questions

For each of the following questions, please circle yes or no, and provide a comment or explanation, if needed.

*In the past two weeks, has your child/student...*

- Stated his/her strengths? Yes  No
- Stated his/her weaknesses? Yes  No
- Made an independent decision? Yes  No
- Recognized his/her responsibilities? Yes  No
- Set a goal? Yes  No
- Asked for help? Yes  No
- Asked a question to clarify something? Yes  No
- Made more than one attempt to accomplish a task? Yes  No
- expressed satisfaction/disappointment about an outcome?  Yes   No
- expressed an opinion or belief?  Yes   No
- been more focused/determined to complete schoolwork?  Yes   No
- increased participation in school?  Yes   No
- expressed their needs?  Yes   No
- turned in more homework?  Yes   No
- expressed more interest in school and/or learning?  Yes   No
- attempted more tasks?  Yes   No
- seemed more excited for school?  Yes   No
Additional Comments:

____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Motivation Rating Scale (Post-Test Only)

Motivation Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel motivated to...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Do Not Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do my homework</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate in class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask for help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set a goal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make choices on my own</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do the things I like, even if my friends don’t like it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to an adult when I have a problem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work harder in school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other – (Explain):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
References


Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 20


