



## Self-Determination Skills Empower Students of All Ages

*Kit Casey, Transition Specialist*

*How well do students really understand themselves? Can they identify their areas of interest as well as the things they are good at and enjoy doing? Are they aware of their needs – those connected with their disabilities?*

The responses to these questions are at the heart of self-determination skills, skills that students need to be successful both in school and in the community. Information about students' strengths, interests and preferences, as well what is required to access their education, is included in the Present Levels of Performance sections of their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Still, many students remain unaware of these important aspects of themselves. This suggests that they may not be participating in the development of their IEPs, or are not aware of information in these documents,



or both.

Research has consistently shown that students who are involved in the development of their own IEPs will have improved postsecondary outcomes in the areas of education and employment. (National Technical Assistance Center on Transition Evidence-based Practices and Predictors in Secondary Transition: *What We Know and What We Still Need to Know*,

[www.transitionta.org/system/files/effectivepractices/](http://www.transitionta.org/system/files/effectivepractices/)

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# School Tool: I'm Determined!

Understanding and articulating one's strengths, interests, preferences and needs is the foundation for self-determination. *I'm Determined!* is a free website offering materials and resources to educators, parents and students of all ages. Videos are available featuring students discussing their own personal experiences. Other materials include downloadable templates on topics including tips on helping students prepare for their IEP meetings, graphic organizers to help students plan their days, and more. Educators in particular may find the modules useful. They highlight specific areas such as disability awareness and include links to other resources. For those who want comprehensive materials to use in the classroom, check out the I'm Determined Toolbox for Self-Determination.

Click here to reach the *I'm Determined!* website: <https://www.imdetermined.org>.

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[EBPP Exec Summary 2016 12 13 16.pdf](#)). This means that students who are more engaged in the development of their own planning processes, will likely have better outcomes as adults.

Educators and others can begin the self-determination process by asking a few questions. While not all questions may be appropriate for all students, keep in mind that developing self-determination skills is a life-long journey beginning in elementary school or earlier.

1. Can the student identify his or her disabilities or classifications?
2. Can the student articulate how the disability affects learning at school and functioning outside school?
3. Is each student aware that he or she has a specially

developed IEP and Committee on Special Education (CSE) and that the purpose is to better access the education curriculum? For students aged 15 and older, the purpose is also to help develop postsecondary goals as well as opportunities to achieve them.

4. Is the student aware of the programs, services, activities and goals that are in place to help him or her be successful?
5. Does the student actively participate in his or her Annual Review meeting? Students who are age 15 and older must be invited to their meetings. Many districts opt to invite younger students to attend all or part of their meetings.
6. Does the student understand how and when to disclose his or her needs, based on the disabilities, to outside professionals including

employers, college counselors, intake coordinators and others?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," or "unsure," it may be useful to address these areas with students. To get some ideas about getting started, check out *I'm Determined!*, the featured School Tool listed above. *I'm Determined!* is a website offering direct instruction materials and resources promoting opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate self-determination practices.

## References

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition Evidence-based Practices and Predictors in Secondary Transition: *What We Know and What We Still Need to Know* [https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/effectivepractices/EBPP\\_Exec\\_Summary\\_2016\\_12\\_13\\_16.pdf](https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/effectivepractices/EBPP_Exec_Summary_2016_12_13_16.pdf)



# Come Learn with us at our upcoming Regional Trainings

## Individualized Educational Planning & the CSE Process

### February

- Testing Accommodations, 2/1 **\*Wait List\***
- Language Acquisition vs Learning Disability, 2/15
- Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Evaluations, 2/25

### March

- Testing Accommodations, 3/1 **\*Wait List\***
- Language Acquisition vs Learning Disability, 3/6
- New CSE/CPSE Chairperson Training (3-Day), 3/13, 3/20 & 3/27 **\*Wait List\***

## Behavior & Discipline Supports

### February

- Team Implementation Guidance, 2/14

### March

- Team Implementation Guidance, 3/14
- SWIS Training, 3/20 **\*INVITATION ONLY\***

### April

- Team Implementation Guidance, 4/12

## Leadership

### February

- CSE Roundtable, 2/7 **\*Wait List\***
- CPSE Colloquium, 2/13

### March

- What Principals Need to Know: Manifestation Determinations, 3/12

### April

- CSE Roundtable, 4/9 **\*Wait List\***

## Instructional Practices

### February

- Literacy for ELLs with Disabilities: What's Different?, 2/28

## Transition Systems

### February

- WE-CAN (Westchester Educators and Community Agencies Network), 2/7
- Putnam County Transition Consortium, 2/14
- Crossing the Finish Line: Student Exit Summary, 2/15
- Transition Specialist Network, 2/28 **\*Wait List\***

### March

- WE-CAN (Westchester Educators and Community Agencies Network), 3/7
- Introduction to Transition Assessments for Middle School and High School Students, 3/13
- Putnam County Transition Consortium, 3/14
- Transition Planning & Assessments for Students Entering College, 3/28

### April

- Job Coaching Students with Disabilities, 4/3
- WE-CAN (Westchester Educators and Community Agencies Network), 4/4
- Diploma and Credential Options for Students with Disabilities, 4/12
- Transition Planning & Assessments for Students with Higher Support Needs, 4/30



# Community Events

## PNW BOCES

[www.pnwbooces.org/catalog](http://www.pnwbooces.org/catalog)

- Assistive Technology Forum, 2/7
- Achieving Differentiation Through a Student-Driven Classroom, begins 2/13
- Get More Math!, 2/13
- Wilson Reading System® Introductory Course, begins 2/19

## Rockland BOCES

[www.rocklandbooces.org](http://www.rocklandbooces.org)

- Youth Connections Orientation, 2/4
- Transition Workshop Series: Self-Advocacy, 2/13
- Fiction Comprehension Toolkit: How to Make Your Teaching Stick, 2/27

## SW BOCES

[www.swbooces.org](http://www.swbooces.org)

- Positive Behavior Supports: What You Need to Know, 2/12

## Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD)

<https://www.wihd.org/events>

- Preparing for Your Child's Annual Review, 2/4
- Transition from CPSE to CSE: A Workshop for Parents, 2/6
- CPSE/CSE Parent Member Training, 2/8
- Developing Measurable Annual Goals and Measuring Student Progress, 2/11
- SOS: Supporting Our Students—Supporting and Building Social Competence, 2/12
- Language & Literacy: Developing Communication Skills in Young Children, 2/26

**View the RSE-TASC Training Calendar and Register at**  
[rsetasc.pnwbooces.org/events/](http://rsetasc.pnwbooces.org/events/)



# BRIGHT SPOTS!

This month's Bright Spot comes from educators in Mount Vernon, Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES, Westlake, Yonkers, Mount Pleasant Cottage School, and Garrison who attended a training on Classroom Management by the RSE-TASC Behavior Specialists.

## What were students with disabilities able to achieve?

Participants tried out some of the strategies they learned on the first day of training and shared the results on the second day. Here are a few examples of student impacts:

- \* Student engagement and on-task behavior for individual work increased measurably
- \* Student on-task behavior during group work increased measurably
- \* Students followed morning routines and independently completed morning office work in a TEACCH classroom
- \* Students increased on-time arrivals and preparedness
- \* Students participated more actively during lessons, with greater peer-to-peer accountable talk
- \* Students increased the frequency with which they responded to teacher questions
- \* Students were demonstrably more excited about conversation topics

## What practices or systems made this possible?

Participants said this increase in positive classroom behaviors was directly related to their use of strategies learned in the training, including:

- ⇒ Provision of more frequent opportunities to respond (OTR) through the use of Turn & Talk, white boards, choral responding, thumbs up-thumbs down, and calling on non-volunteers
- ⇒ Frequent acknowledgement of students using "Behavior Specific Praise"
- ⇒ Greeting every student at the door and tracking their completion of morning routines
- ⇒ Use of quick frequent check-ins, like Fist to Five, to assess both interest and understanding during a lesson

## What can we learn from this?

Good classroom management is directly aligned with the use of instructional strategies that keep students actively involved and feeling successful. When students are expected to be continually responding and demonstrating their learning, and when they are acknowledged frequently for their efforts, they are less likely to demonstrate off-task behavior.

## RSE-TASC Staff

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