Region 4 TTAC @ GMU Announces:

# HLPs in Action

Community of Practice 4-Part Series

**Upcoming Events**

- Part 3- February 24th, 2021
  Supporting Young Children's Mental Health
- Part 4- March 17th, 2021
  Families as Partners

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# School to Work Transition: If it's Broke, Fix it

Meeting the legal requirements of transition services dictated by federal law does not ensure positive postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (DeFur, 2003). Most of the disconnect emanates from either students not receiving services detailed in the transition plan or poorly written transition plans that contain vague goals, no coordinating activities, and no connection to the students' postsecondary aspirations (DeFur, 2003; Landmark & Zhang, 2013). The move from compliance to results-driven accountability, while not mutually exclusive, necessitates an accurate, individualized approach to transition planning with an eye on the student's postschool goals. The poor postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities compared to their nondisabled peers led researchers and practitioners to take a closer look at the impact of self-determination (Shogren & Ward, 2018). The focus on self-determination started in the late 1980s with a national initiative sponsored by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). The goal was to increase students with disabilities' level of autonomy for both their educational plan and daily living decisions (Shogren & Ward, 2018).

Get **Ready** to understand the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in building foundational skills that lead to successful employment outcomes. Self-Determined Theory (SDT) is widely accepted as the foundational blueprint for supporting self-determined behaviors. Numerous studies conducted link autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the causal factors leading to increased self-determined behaviors (O'Brien, 2018; Sun et al., 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2018; Wisniewski et al., 2018). It is essential for any educator to improve postschool outcomes for students with disabilities through increased self-determined behaviors to set the stage by ensuring a sense of the essential characteristics of SDT within their classroom and their everyday interactions with their students. Evidence-based practice will only work if the foundational elements of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are present within the selected environment.

The autonomy supported classroom moves from the traditional behavior of educators as controllers and monitors to that of facilitators and guides (Wisniewski et al., 2018). When autonomy is present in the classroom, students can make decisions and learn from consequences without manipulation or coercion from outside influences, including peers, educators, or administrators.

The most basic interpretation of competence through the lens of SDT is the need to feel that one can successfully navigate the task at hand. Teacher awareness about activities that promote processing speed over knowledge attainment is essential to establishing a safe environment and gives students opportunities to build competence while also leveling the playing field (Bohanon et al., 2015; Wisniewski et al., 2018).

Relatedness in the context of SDT is the connection one feels to their community, be it through the classroom or familial, school, or neighborhood ties (Shogren et al., 2014). Academically, intrinsic motivation is directly related to teacher praise and positive student-teacher interaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Check out the I'm Determined website for videos further explaining the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Get **Set** to use three simple tools from the Virginia Department of Education's I'm Determined Project to help build these skills.

The I'm Determined One-Pager supports building autonomy through focusing on core work-related skills like self-regulation, choice-making, decision making, and the development of one's internal locus of control. One example of autonomy in the One-Pager includes the identification of preferences and sharing those preferences with teachers. Students might say "I prefer to learn by doing activities". Affording students opportunities to speak their preferences and responding is a concrete example of developing autonomy and autonomy-supportive environments.

The I'm Determined Good Day Plan supports building competence by focusing on core work-related skills like problem-solving, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-efficacy. One example of competence in the Good Day Plan is the opportunity to make decisions about what actions are needed to make the day good. A great example of this happens when individuals reflect upon the learning enhancements of particular assistive technologies. The third column of the Good Day Plan affords students to build competence through reflective practice and helps regulate behavior through self-analyzing personal

needs for good days. It is through continuous problem-solving efforts by students that competence is developed.

The I'm Determined Goal Plan supports building relatedness through focusing on core work-related skills like goal setting and attainment, self-awareness, and self-efficacy. One example of relatedness in the Goal Plan exists when students list who can support them to reach specific goals. This happens when youth see connections between social support and goal attainment. In practice, this looks like a youth choosing the track coach to create a training plan for running a 5k, or an English professor to edit a paper. Goals are achieved when individuals can elicit specific support from those who hold specific strengths. The Goal Plan provides for the establishment of relationships that enhance opportunities for goal attainment.

## Go

Explore the following resources to support your efforts in building the essential foundational skills that lead to successful postschool outcomes for youth with disabilities.

- I'm Determined, VDOE
- Self-Determination, Kansas University website
- Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment, University of Oklahoma
- National Teacher Assistance Center on Transition

# References

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