Promoting Positive Transition Outcomes for Secondary Students with Intellectual Disability: Impact of Interventions to Enhance Self-Determination and Goal Attainment

Project
The purpose of this multi-year project was to examine the impact of the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction* (SDLMI) combined with *Whose Future Is It?* (WF) on transition and self-determination outcomes for transition-age students with intellectual disability. The SDLMI is an evidence-based practice that enables teachers to teach students to self-regulate problem solving to set and achieve goals (for learning and postschool work, education, and community participation), and WF is an evidence-based transition planning curriculum.

Context
In 2015, special education teachers began implementing interventions to promote self-determination as part of larger efforts in the state of Rhode Island to enhance secondary special education and promote more integrated postschool employment outcomes for students with intellectual disability.

Methods
- In Year 1, teachers implemented the SDLMI with 184 students.
- In Year 2, teachers implemented interventions with 340 students (half of teachers implemented the SDLMI in combination with WF, while the other half of teachers continued implementing the SDLMI only).
- In Year 3, all teachers implemented the SDLMI and WF with 359 students.

Key Findings
- Across the three years of the project, students showed enhanced self-determination and goal attainment. Teachers were consistently able to implement the SDLMI as designed in their classrooms.
  - After one year, implementation of only the SDLMI produced greater student-reported self-determination outcomes (as measured with the *Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report*) than the SDLMI and WF combined.
  - However, in the subsequent year, the combined effect of the SDLMI and WF on student-reported self-determination outcomes was greater than the SDLMI only.
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Policy Recommendations

- Use direct instruction to promote self-determination in larger context of transition planning
  
  *Self-determination is a critical means to increase access to competitive, integrated employment and integrated community life, but it must be considered in the larger context of transition planning. Promoting self-determination is part of a teacher’s transition toolkit, but that toolkit must also include meaningful career design activities and the creation of family and community supports.*

- Promote individualization for range of support needs
  
  *Adolescents with intellectual disability need direct instruction and multiple exemplars for self-determination to become a meaningful part of their lives. Recognizing the range of individual support needs is important both in designing instruction and in setting expectations. Self-determination looks different for every person, and teachers can use evidence-based strategies and supports as part of the SDLMI to individualize instruction.*

- Integrated, effective on-site coaching for teachers
  
  *Establishing an on-site coaching model can support fidelity of implementation of interventions to promote self-determination. With administrative support, teachers who have received training on how to support their peers in implementing interventions to promote self-determination can take on leadership roles as instructional coaches, enabling better outcomes and more team-based approaches.*

More Information

For more information on studies related to the project, see the following publications: