Writing Lesson Plans for Promoting Self-Determination

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"What if I want to get married?"

"Can I have my own apartment?"

"Will they fire me if I'm late?"

"What does 'self-advocacy' mean?"

"I don't like my boss. What can I do?"

"How do I vote? Who should I vote for?"

"What if I want children?"

These are questions that many caregivers—and educators—don't know how to answer or how to guide their kids or their students in finding answers. What are basic rights that all U.S. citizens take for granted, but that are difficult or almost impossible for people with disabilities to attain? How can parents, educators, and other professionals assist young people in finding answers to these questions—how can we successfully teach self-determination skills? (See box, "What Does the Literature Say?")

One way teachers can begin implementing self-determination lessons is to use one or more published curriculums to teach self-determination skills. We

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Teachers can use the process described here to translate information research studies into practical lesson plans.

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have provided a list of published self-determination curriculums, as well as a procedure teachers can use to choose a curriculum that best meets the needs of their students (Test, Karvonen, Wood, Browder, & Algozzine, 2000). A second way to teach these skills is to construct your own lesson plans, working together with other teachers and researchers to apply the research on promoting self-determination.

This article describes a process that you can use to translate information in research studies into practical lesson plans. We have drawn examples from the self-determination literature.

The Self-Determination Synthesis Project

The Self-Determination Synthesis Project (SDSP) was a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, to synthesize and disseminate available knowledge and best practices related to self-determination for students with disabilities. The purpose of the project was to improve, expand, and accelerate the adoption of research-based strategies for promoting self-determination to teachers.

As part of the SDSP effort, we conducted a comprehensive literature review of self-determination intervention research. We identified 51 studies in which an intervention had been used to promote self-determination with people with disabilities (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001). Of these 51 studies, 45 contained enough information for us to translate the research

into "lesson plan starters" (see box, "Resources for Lesson Plans," for a list of sample articles, together with the self-determination skills they address).

Developing a Lesson Plan From a Research Article

In this article, we model the process we used to develop our lesson plans and provide suggestions for extending this information to more specific, *direct instruction* lesson plans and *systematic instruction* lesson plans. The lesson plans on our Web site (see http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp) could be called lesson plan "starters" because they summarize information that can be gathered from research articles. Each lesson plan includes five components: objective, setting and materials, content taught, teaching procedures, and method of evaluation. (See Figure 1 for an example of a self-determination lesson plan starter.) You may need to adapt this information for the learning needs of specific students, and you may need to rewrite lesson plans to conform to the format of a specific school system.

Objective

The objective for a research-article lesson plan is derived from the purpose or hypothesis of the study. You can find this information in one of two places. It is usually in the first or second sentence of the study's abstract. A better place to look, however, is the last paragraph of the introduction or literature review. In the lesson plan starter in Figure 1, based on the research study of Sievert et al. (1988), the objective comes from the

Figure 1. Sample Lesson Plan Starter: Self-Determination Research-to-Practice

1. **Objective:** To teach students with mild disabilities: (a) to determine whether their legal rights have been violated in certain interpersonal situations, and (b) a general complaints process for redressing rights violation.

2. **Setting and materials:** Classroom or community settings could be used. Possible community settings include a living unit in an apartment building for people with disabilities, the recreation room at the apartment building, and a discount department store. An overhead projector, screen, transparencies, videocassette recorder, telephone, and a telephone directory of agencies frequently used by persons with disabilities.

3. **Content:**

   A. Specific Rights

   ### I. Personal Rights: Rights to which one is entitled as a member of society

   - Right to marry
   - Right to show physical affection to a person of the opposite sex
   - Right to use birth control
   - Right to have and raise children
   - Right to vote
   - Right to get help when voting
   - Right to get driver's license

   ### II. Community Rights: Rights to which one is entitled when living in the community.

   - Right to get a job
   - Right to a minimum wage
   - Right to proper notice if you are being fired
   - Right to safe working conditions
   - Right to equal consideration for promotion and other benefits
   - Right to housing
   - Right to privacy
   - Right to repairs if renting
   - Right to have visitors of your choice when renting
   - Right to use public facilities

   ### III. Human Service Rights: Rights to which one is entitled as a consumer of human services

   - Right to services
   - Right to advance notice of any change in assistance
   - Right not to have your records shown to anyone
   - Right to look at your records
   - Right to go to staff meetings
   - Right to refuse to participate in or withdraw from research anytime
   - Right to quit services anytime

   ### IV. Consumer Rights: Rights to which one is entitled as a buyer of product

   - Right to be told the truth about products
   - Right to choose what to buy
   - Right to buy safe products
   - Right to have action taken on your complaint

   B. Redressing Rights
   1. An assertion of one's rights (e.g., "You have no right to …").
   2. An explanation of why one's rights were violated, including a statement of conditions that were met (e.g., "I paid the fees, passed the tests, and filled out all the necessary forms").
   3. When complaining to the supervisor or advocacy agency personnel, a description of what already was done to resolve the problem (e.g., "I talked to the sales clerk and his supervisor, and neither of them would help me").

4. **Teaching procedure:**

   A. Discrimination Training Procedures for Four General Legal Rights Categories
   1. Define first general rights category (i.e., personal rights).
   2. Present first specific right (i.e., right to marry).
   3. Present conditions for first specific right (i.e., marriage license, blood test, money to pay the fee, fill out the necessary forms).
   4. Present scenarios illustrating violations and nonviolations of first specific right.
   5. Present second specific right, with Steps 2-4 repeated until all specific rights in the general rights category are presented.
   6. Within General Rights Category Interspersal—scenarios from all specific rights in the first general rights category are presented in arbitrary order.

   Subsequently the rest of the rights can be presented in the same order. The final step is presenting scenarios from specific rights in the first, second, third, and fourth general rights categories.

   B. Redressing Legal Rights Violations
   1. Teacher presents written instructions regarding how to redress rights violations on overhead transparencies and reads them aloud.
      a. The first textual cue states the sequence of persons to whom participants should speak when responding to a rights violation.
      b. The second transparency states the verbal components that should be included in the description of the problem to each of the above personnel.

purpose statement in the last paragraph of the introduction. The objective is twofold: to teach students to determine whether their legal rights have been violated and to teach them a general complaint process (self-advocacy).

Setting and Materials

You can gather information about the setting and materials for the lesson from a variety of places within the research article. Fortunately, many articles have sections labeled "Setting" or "Materials." If not, look in sections called "Subjects/Participants" or "Procedures." The key information to look for is any special setting and instructional materials (e.g., a specific curriculum) that are needed to implement the lesson. For example, in the lesson plan starter in Figure 1, Sievert et al. (1988) used a classroom, an office, and three community settings. In this article, the "Materials" section listed the resources needed for the lessons.

Content Taught

Next, you are looking for a description of the information or skill you will be teaching to students. If the article has no section labeled "Instructional Content," check in the "Materials" section. For example, if a published curriculum is

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What Does the Literature Say About Self-Determination Skills?

Special educators often bemoan the gap between research and practice (Browder, 1997; Carnine, 1997; Kauffman, 1996; Landrum, 1997; Lloyd, Weintraub, & Safer, 1997). Carnine suggested that the gap exists for two reasons. First, research may not be designed for direct application to practice, and second, teachers do not always see the implications of research for their classrooms.

One area that is currently receiving much attention in the research literature is self-determination. The concept of self-determination was defined by Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer (1998) as

 a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults. (p. 2)

For teachers to more easily promote self-determination in their classrooms, the concept of self-determination has been divided into a number of teachable components. The components most commonly identified in the literature (e.g., Field & Hoffman, 1994; Mithaug, Campeau, & Wolman, 1992; Ward, 1988; Wehmeyer, 1996) are as follows:
- Choice/decision-making.
- Goal setting/attainment.
- Problem-solving.
- Self-evaluation/management.
- Self-advocacy.
- Person-centered planning for individualized education programs (IEPs).
- Relationships with others.
- Self-awareness.

Unfortunately, research on best practice for promoting self-determination is still not being translated into classroom use. Since recent studies indicate that student IEPs do not contain self-determination goals and objectives (Agran, Snow, & Swaner, 1999; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998), it is likely that students are not receiving ongoing instruction in these important skills.

used, the content of the curriculum will likely be described under "Materials." Second, check the tables or figures. They may list the content to be taught or provide a task analysis for the skill to be learned. Third, skim the "Training or Teaching Procedures" section. Sometimes instructional content and teaching procedures are presented together. Finally, look in the section on "Dependent Variables" or "Measurement Systems."

Most studies collect data on what is being taught. However, because you are adapting a research study, not all the data will be directly relevant to your lesson plan. Your task is to pick out the information or skills measured in the research that directly relate to the content or skills you wish to teach. Remember to refer back to your objective if you start to get lost in the details of a specific research article. In Sievert et al. (1988), two tables listed all the skills to be addressed during instruction.

Teaching Procedure

For this section, you are looking for specific information on how the content or skill was taught to students. Information on teaching procedures is usually found in the "Procedures" section of the article. Often this section is divided into multiple parts, so be sure to look for headings such as "Training Procedures," "Instructional Procedures," and "Training Sessions." Again, check the tables and figures to see if examples of the teaching procedures are provided. In Sievert et al. (1988), this information was found under the heading "Training."

Method of Evaluation

This section is probably the most difficult to find information on because most research studies collect more data than you would typically collect to evaluate the effects of your instruction on student performance. Information on how to evaluate student learning or skill acquisition is typically found in the section on "Dependent Variables." As with instructional content, you need to sift through the various dependent variables or pre- and postmeasures to determine what is best for your students.

Our suggestion is to look for how the students' responses in the study were counted as correct or incorrect on the content taught or the skill learned. If students are learning to perform a new skill using role-playing, we recommend that student skill evaluation be extended to include use of the skill in "real" or "live" environments (e.g., grocery stores, restaurants, general education classrooms). For exam-ple, Sievert et al. (1988) used role-play assessments in both classroom and community settings to evaluate students' acquisition of self-advocacy skills.

Adapting the Lesson Plan Starters for Specific Lesson Plans

In Figure 1, we have provided a lesson plan starter based on Sievert et al. (1988). As mentioned earlier, you can find 45 of these lesson plan starters on our Web site (www.uncc.edu/sdsp). To translate these starters into specific lesson plans, you may want to use either a direct or systematic instruction format. (See Figure 2 for a sample "direct instruction" framework and Figure 3 for a sample "systematic instruction" plan framework.)

Direct Instruction Lesson Plans

Direct instruction (Carnine, Filbert, & Kameenui, 1997) is most applicable when the teacher's goal is for students to both learn conceptual knowledge and apply skills in a practice session. The content of each day's lesson may change as the teacher progresses through an instructional unit. For example, most students would not be able to master all the material shown in Figure 1 in one lesson. Rather, this content might be adapted as an instructional unit on self-advocacy. The first day's lesson could be on personal rights.

To implement a direct instruction lesson on personal rights, you might follow these steps:
- First, use an "attention getter." For example, you might share an article or video clip about people with disabilities getting married.
- Next, state the objective of the lesson: "Today we are going to learn about your personal rights." If you use new vocabulary concepts, briefly define them. If you need links to prior lessons, conduct a quick review. For example, before beginning the next lesson on community rights, you may ask the students to state their personal rights.
- After any relevant review, introduce each right in a direct instruction format by using frequent responding with prompts and feedback, as needed. For example: "In an election you have the right to—Everyone?" The

Resources for Lesson Plans

Examples of self-determination skills included in lesson plan starters are indicated in italics following each resource.

Abery, B., Rudrud, L., Arndt, K., Schauben, L., & Eggebeen, A. (1995). Evaluating a multicomponent program for enhancing the self-determination of youth with disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 30,* 170-179. *Ten component skills of self-determination*

Adelman, H. S., MacDonald, V. M., Nelson, P., Smith, D. C., & Taylor, L. (1990). Motivational readiness and the participation of children with learning and behavior problems in psychoeducational decision making. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 23,* 171-176. *Participation in decision-making*

Artesani, A. J., & Mallar, L. (1998). Positive behavior supports in general education settings: Combining person-centered planning and functional analysis. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 34,* 33-38. *Person-centered planning*

Aune, E. (1991). A transition model for post-secondary-bound students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities and Research, 6,* 177-187. *Self-awareness, self-advocacy, decision-making, interpersonal relations*

Balcazar, F. E., Fawcett, S. B., & Seekins, T. (1991). Teaching people with disabilities to recruit help to attain personal goals. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 36,* 31-41. *Help-recruiting (self-advocacy) skills*

Bambara, L. M., & Ager, C. (1992). Using self-scheduling to promote self-directed leisure activity in home and community settings. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 17,* 67-76. *Developing and implementing self-scheduling*

Belfiore, P. J., Browder, D. M., & Mace, C. (1994). Assessing choice making and preference in adults with profound mental retardation across community and center-based settings. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 4,* 217-225. *Choice-making and preference assessment*

Note: All lesson plan starters are available at our Web site (http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp).

Figure 2. Direct Instruction Format

Instructions: Use the Direct Instruction Format for Small-Group or Whole-Class Academic Lessons on Conceptual Understanding

Students/Class:_____   Date: _____
Subject: _____   Skill/Topic:_____

Specific Objective
    Antecedent: _____
    Behavior: _____
    Criteria: _____
    Setting/Materials:_____

Teaching Sequence
I. Anticipatory Set (Focus and Review)
1. Use a focus statement/question/attention getter:

2. State relevance of lesson/learning outcome:

3. Review/transfer past learning to current lesson:

4. Review new vocabulary terms *(list terms here)*:

II. Teaching Input
Sequence/Steps   Questions/Examples/Nonexamples

III. Active Student Responding (Guided Practice)
1. Teacher Cue to Respond _____
2. Signal for Student Response _____
3. Duration of Pause for Response _____
4. Signal Correction ("Everyone answer") _____
5. Response Correction (Check One)
6. _____ Model Test   _____ Model-Lead-Test
7. Example: _____
8. Example of specific praise statement _____

Goal: Positive tone, repeat with group and individuals to get 10 student responses per minute; at least half of praise is specific

IV. Independent Practice (e.g., written work, practice with peer)

V. Summary/Closure

VI. Evaluation of Student Progress

class responds, "Vote." You reply, "Yes, you have the right to vote." You may follow this group response with a check for individual understanding, "Alice, what do you have the right to do in an election?" Alice replies, "I have the right to vote." The teacher says, "That's correct, Alice. Voting is your right."

- Next, class members apply the material in teacher-guided practice. For this lesson, the students can role-play a situation in which their rights are challenged (e.g., going to register to vote).
- Finally, evaluate individual understanding. This may include both a paper-and-pencil assessment (e.g., listing one's personal rights) and applications. For example, you may assess individual understanding by changing the role play (e.g., going for a blood test to get married; purchasing birth control) and having individuals take turns demonstrating what they would do if their rights were challenged.

Obviously, the amount of repetition and practice would vary, depending on students' individual needs. Once the students demonstrate knowledge and application of personal rights, the teacher goes on to the second direct instruction lesson in the self-advocacy unit—community rights.

Many of the studies that include conceptual understanding demonstrate applications with students with mild disabilities. This method of teaching need not be limited to students with more advanced language ability. By using a direct instruction lesson plan adapted for students' rates of learning and response modes, you may assist students with moderate and severe disabilities to benefit from this form of instruction, as well.

Systematic Instruction Lesson Plans

Some studies do not focus on conceptual knowledge, but instead target the performance of specific skills. For example, in Bambara and Ager (1992) participants learned to schedule leisure activities. In Browder, Cooper, and Lim (1998) adults used objects to communicate their choice of settings for leisure activities. In Hughes and Rusch (1989) supported employees followed a problem-solving sequence. In each of these interventions, there was minimal conceptual training. That is, the teacher did not have a lesson to "talk about" self-scheduling, making a choice, or solving problems. Instead, the participants learned to perform these skills "in vivo."

When the focus is on skill performance, a "systematic instruction" lesson plan may be the most useful (Browder, 2001.) The teacher begins by defining the specific, observable responses the student will make. For example, Hughes and Rusch (1989) used a task analysis of the problem-solving sequence. Browder et al. (1998) defined the specific communication responses (e.g., using a golf ball to ask to play golf). Next, the teacher defines the method of prompting and feedback to be used. In research articles that focus on skill performance, these methods are often described in detail. For example, Bambara and Ager (1992) offered specific details on how they modeled each step of the self-scheduling sequence and provided praise or correction after the participant made a response. The research study may also provide information on how to teach or evaluate the student's generalization of the skill to novel materials or setting.

In research articles, look for specific information on how the content or skill was taught to students, and what results were obtained.

severe disabilities to perform specific tasks. Students with mild disabilities may also use this systematic method to learn a complex new skill. For example, the participants in Bambara and Ager (1992) learned to use a personal planner to schedule their leisure time activities several days in advance and make the necessary arrangements for these activities through a systematic method of prompting and feedback.

Final Thoughts

Whether educators use direct instruction or specific skills instruction, they can use information from research to promote students' self-determination skills. However teachers adapt research into lesson plans, a focus on self-determination can help students take charge of their learning and their lives.

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Bambara, L. M., & Ager, C. (1992). Using self-scheduling to promote self-directed leisure activity in home and community settings. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 17,* 67-76.

Browder, D. M. (1997). Educating students with severe disabilities: Enhancing the conversation between research and practice. *Journal of Special Education, 31,* 137-144.

Browder, D. M. (2001). *Curriculum and instruction for students with moderate and severe disabilities.* New York: Guilford Press.*

Browder, D. M., Cooper, K. J., & Lim, L. (1998). Teaching adults with severe disabilities to express their choice of settings for leisure activities. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 33,* 228-238.

When skill performance is the target and a systematic instruction lesson plan is created, the same lesson is used daily until the student masters the skill. In research studies that used this approach, participants sometimes have needed several months to learn to perform the target skill. Over these months of repeating the exact same systematic instruction, the teacher gradually fades the prompts and feedback until the participant can perform the skill without help.

The research by Cooper and Browder (1998) on teaching students to make choices is one of several studies that can be adapted to a systematic instruction lesson plan. In this lesson, the teacher offers two options and asks, "Which one?" If the student makes no indication of choice after a pause of several seconds, the teacher says, "Let's try this one" and guides the student's hand to point to a choice. The teacher then gives the student access to that choice. If the student points without hand guidance, the teacher praises this response: "Thanks for letting me know your choice!" This encourages independent responding.

Systematic prompting and feedback skills have often been used in research to teach students with moderate and

Carnine, D. W. (1997). Bridging the research-to-practice gap. *Exceptional Children, 63,* 513-521

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Books Now

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