

**The Effects of Self-Advocacy Instruction on Eighth Grade Students with Disabilities
and Their IEP Meeting Participation**

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Abstract

Students with disabilities often possess limited self-advocacy skills, limited knowledge of their disabilities, and limited self-determination (Phillips, 1990; Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005). Too often, they passively participate in their IEP meetings because they do not understand their role (Van Dycke, Martin, & Lovett, 2006). The purpose of this study was to emphasize the importance of instruction with students with disabilities to improve their self-advocacy skills, their self-determination, and their IEP meeting participation. This mixed methods study involved 11 eighth grade students with disabilities. Students were assigned to an intervention group, who received self-advocacy instruction, or a control group. All students completed an IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] as pre-test and post-test measures. Students responded to four weekly journal prompts associated with topics discussed in the four weekly lessons. All students were observed at their IEP meetings and were administered a survey to assess their feelings and perceptions regarding their IEP meeting participation.

Data were analyzed to determine how self-advocacy instruction influenced self-advocacy knowledge, self-determination skills, and IEP meeting participation. Results revealed that self-advocacy instruction was effective in increasing self-determination, quality of IEP meeting participation, and knowledge of the importance of self-advocacy. Instruction was not effective in increasing students' knowledge of the IEP, knowledge of their accommodations, and knowledge of their rights as students with disabilities. This study offers insight into self-advocacy instruction that is likely to have a positive impact on students' self-determination, self-advocacy knowledge and skills, knowledge of personal disabilities, and IEP meeting participation.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the students with disabilities who were the inspiration for this inquiry. To those students who have no idea why they have an IEP and why they are being asked to attend their IEP meetings, my hope is that this study will contribute to improved practices in special education so that they and the students who follow them in their academic careers will experience more positive outcomes in high school and beyond.

I also dedicate this study to my husband who has always recognized more potential in me than I knew I had and who has encouraged me out of my comfort zone so many times. James, I appreciate your support more than you know and I acknowledge all the sacrifices you made so that this journey could be realized. I would not be the person I am today if it were not for your love, your coaching, and your understanding. To my children, Gabriel and Gracelynn: I hope you come to understand that anything in life worth possessing or achieving requires hard work and diligence. I hope that I have inspired you and will continue to inspire you to achieve greatness in whatever you feel called to pursue. Remember that whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might and as unto the Lord.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Individuals with disabilities face unique challenges throughout their academic careers. These struggles do not cease after earning a high school diploma but rather persist into postsecondary training and adulthood. Development of self-advocacy skills is vital for individuals with disabilities to flourish in postsecondary settings and to transition successfully into adult life (Phillips, 1990; Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005; Van Dycke, Martin, & Lovett, 2006; Wehmeyer, 1997). Unfortunately, students frequently do not have a clear understanding of their disabilities, are not provided with opportunities to develop skills to advocate for their own needs, and too often rely upon adults to advocate for them (Phillips, 1990; Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). To compound the problem, students are legally required to be invited to their own Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings beginning at age 14 and are expected to participate in developing their education plans by age 16 (Kansas State Department of Education, 2011). However, the extent of many students' involvement in the development of their plans is minimal. Consequently, it is difficult for these students to engage meaningfully in discussion at their IEP team meetings so many students decide to not attend at all (Van Dycke et al., 2006). This problem has been described as preposterous as children listening to adults discussing and planning their birthday parties but never being invited to attend them until they are teenagers. By that time, children wonder why they are invited and may decide their presence is irrelevant because adults have always done the planning for them and attended in their place (Van Dycke et al., 2006).

This chapter contains a description of the background for the present study, including the conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities and policies supporting self-advocacy. This chapter also provides a statement of the problem being addressed and discusses the significance and purpose. In addition, the delimitations inherent to the design of the present study and the assumptions adopted by the researcher are mentioned. Further, the research questions are stated, definitions of terms are provided, and a brief overview of the methodology employed is given. The chapter ends with a summary.

Background

Currently, individuals with disabilities are afforded rights and safeguards to ensure they are provided a free and appropriate public education, in addition to necessary supports and accommodations, to ensure their success in school and into postsecondary settings (Kansas State Department of Education, 2011). This was not always true for these individuals, however. As early as the prerevolutionary era in the United States, the most society could offer individuals with disabilities was asylum from a cruel world in which they did not fit and in which they could not subsist with dignity (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000). However, the ideals of democracy and egalitarianism moved swiftly through America and France during that time and changes in attitudes began to emerge. Political leaders and reformers began to advocate for the needs of individuals with disabilities, urging that they be taught skills that would foster their development into independent and productive citizens (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000). The advocacy of these political leaders and reformers supplied the underpinning for current legislation and

policies that protect individuals with disabilities from the mistreatment they once encountered.

Historical background of self-advocacy. Once advocacy for individuals with disabilities was more widely accepted by society, the idea of self-advocacy began to emerge. For example, the US Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which emphasized improving the rights of individuals who experienced oppression due to their differences, provided a springboard to promote self-advocacy for people with disabilities (McCarthy, 2003). Also during the era of the Civil Rights Movement, the federal government, with strong advocacy from family associations, began to develop and endorse practices for children with disabilities and their families, which laid the foundation for special education programs across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., p. 2).

While the Civil Rights Movement prompted an awareness of self-advocacy for individuals with disabilities, the heart of the self-advocacy movement for individuals with disabilities can be traced back to the People First initiative, which began in Sweden in 1968 following a parent organizational meeting. The intended focus of the meeting was for parents to advocate for their young adult children with disabilities. The young adults at the meeting, however, decided they wanted to speak for themselves so subsequent meetings were held to provide opportunities for them to do so. By 1974, the idea of self-advocacy had spread into England, Canada, and ultimately Oregon USA where the first official People First Convention was held. The idea of self-advocacy began to proliferate and became an international movement (People First of West Virginia, 2011).

In 1975, a milestone federal law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (also known as Public Law 94-142), was passed in the U.S., which guaranteed a free and appropriate public education to each child with a disability. This law also protected the rights of children with disabilities and their parents and ensured efficacy and assessment of instructional efforts for all children with disabilities. In addition, the law assisted states and districts in providing an education for all children with disabilities via funding (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In 1990, an amendment to this act changed the name to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 and 2004 moved beyond simply providing access to public school programs to improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. With it came a reiteration of the importance of student involvement in the planning of their own Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) when postsecondary goals and pursuits are being explored (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). More specifically, this law requires students with disabilities be invited to attend and participate in their IEP meetings beginning at age 14 and mandates that educators include students in the planning process to ensure students' unique interests become the focus of postsecondary planning (Kansas State Department of Education, 2011).

Components of self-advocacy. Self-advocacy is a skill associated with self-determination (Field, 1996) and most of the literature has defined self-advocacy as a component of self-determination (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). After reviewing numerous studies related to self-advocacy instruction, Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005) suggested four overarching components of self-advocacy including: (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) communication, and (d) leadership. These researchers

stated their belief that knowledge of self and knowledge of rights are fundamental traits of self-advocacy because individuals must understand themselves and their needs before they are able to express what they want to others. Communication is regarded as critical to self-advocacy because individuals must be able to convey their wants and needs effectively. These researchers also stated their belief that leadership not only encompasses self-advocacy such as that demonstrated in an IEP meeting, but also demonstrates advocacy for the rights of others (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). A more detailed description of the components of self-advocacy is provided in chapter two.

Statement of the Problem

While it is a legal requirement that students be invited to their IEP meetings, often their participation is limited or passive in nature. One study in the literature involved the observation of middle school and high school students during their IEP meetings and revealed that students talked only 3% of the time (Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, Gardner, Christensen, Woods, & Lovett, 2006). This may be attributed to the lack of opportunities for students to acquire self-advocacy skills and the lack of experiences with IEP meeting participation (Izzo & Lamb, 2003; Van Dycke et al., 2006). Other research has indicated that students with learning difficulties often become passive learners and do not possess essential self-awareness and self-advocacy skills (Phillips, 1990). A national survey of teachers' opinions on instruction in self-advocacy and self-determination skills indicated that the majority of teachers believe it is important but identify barriers to implementation, including limited training and limited time to provide the instruction (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000).

In summary, often students do not understand their own disabilities well enough to advocate for their own needs. In addition, the IEP is seldom developed with ample student input (Izzo & Lamb, 2003; Van Dycke et al., 2006). Federal and state law mandates that educators invite students to IEP meetings by age 14, yet most students do not possess the necessary skills to participate meaningfully. Researchers have recognized that explicit instruction is essential in order for students to acquire the skills needed to advocate for themselves and to participate meaningfully at their IEP meetings (Arndt, Konrad, & Test, 2006; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Grigal, Neubert, Moon, & Graham, 2003; Hammer, 2004; Izzo, Hertzfeld, & Aaron, 2001; Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, Greene, Gardner, & Lovett, 2006; Martin, Van Dycke, Green, et al., 2006; Mason, Field, & Sawilowsky, 2004; Meglemre, 2010; Staab, 2010; Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale, & Wood, 2004; Test & Neale, 2004; Van Dycke et al., 2006; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Garner, & Lawrence, 2007; Wood, Karvonen, Test, Browder, & Algozzine, 2004).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of explicit self-advocacy instruction on 8th grade students' knowledge of their own disabilities and accommodations. Furthermore, this study explored how the self-advocacy instruction influenced the students' level of self-determination and the nature and degree of their IEP meeting participation. Comparisons were also made between a group of students who received the instruction and a control group of students who did not receive instruction.

Significance of the Study

The present study explored how students can learn and apply self-advocacy skills in order to be meaningful participants in their IEP meetings. District leaders might find the results of this study useful when considering the implementation of a program for teaching self-advocacy skills to students with disabilities. Additionally, this research has contributed to the existing research on self-advocacy instruction for students with disabilities. Furthermore, researchers who have studied different facets of self-advocacy instruction have recommended that future research should include: (a) diverse participants and a variety of disabilities, (b) social validity data, (c) a control group, (d) procedural fidelity data, and (e) generalization of skills to an actual IEP meeting (Test, Fowler, Brewer, & Wood, 2005). With the exception of social validity, the current study addressed the features recommended by these researchers for further inquiry.

Delimitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) described delimitations as “self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (p. 134). Following are the delimitations the researcher utilized to narrow the focus for this study:

1. The sample of students was limited to selected eighth grade students with disabilities in three middle schools in a suburban school district in Kansas and, therefore, cannot be generalized to all students in all states.
2. The intervention group contained students from one middle school who received explicit self-advocacy instruction.
3. The control group contained students from two middle schools who did not receive explicit self-advocacy instruction but who completed a survey about

the IEP, an instrument measuring self-determination skills, and who responded to journal prompts as did the intervention group.

4. The intervention occurred during the spring semester of the 2011-12 school year, and the duration of the instruction was limited to six weeks.
5. The length of the sessions was limited to thirty minutes and the frequency of the sessions was limited to once per week.
6. The study examined how students were able to generalize learned skills from the intervention within approximately two weeks following instruction when students were observed at their respective IEP meetings. Therefore, the study did not address long-term effects of the intervention.

Assumptions

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), assumptions shape a research undertaking and, when clearly defined, provide a basis for developing research questions (p. 135). The present study included the following assumptions: (a) the curriculum utilized for instruction was adequate to address the needs of the participants; (b) the students understood the questions on the surveys and questionnaires; (c) the students selected for this study completed the written activities honestly and gave adequate thought and consideration to responses; and (d) the interpretation of the data received through survey responses was consistent with the participants' wording intent.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed to determine whether self-advocacy instruction increases students' self-advocacy skills:

1. How much growth occurred between pre-intervention measures and post-intervention measures of self-advocacy, using The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] and the IEP Survey[®], among students who received explicit self-advocacy instruction?
2. To what extent are the differences in growth scores (post-test minus pre-test), as measured by the IEP Survey[®], affected by group status (i.e. students who received self-advocacy instruction and students who did not)?
3. To what extent are the differences in growth scores (post-test minus pre-test), as measured by The Arc Self-Determination Scale[®], affected by group status (i.e. students who received self-advocacy instruction and students who did not)?
4. What differences exist in the degree of IEP meeting participation, as measured by the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric, between students who received self-advocacy instruction and those who did not?

Definition of Terms

Ridley (2008) emphasized the importance of avoiding assumptions of common agreement about the meaning of words and phrases used in a study (p. 22). Therefore, to provide clarity for the reader, these terms are defined as follows for the purpose of the present study:

IEP. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for each student with a disability, which describes the student's educational program. The IEP is developed by a team including parents, at least one of the student's general education teachers, a school administrator, other relevant school personnel, the student (when appropriate), and personnel from other agencies when addressing student needs related to

postsecondary settings. Each IEP must be developed with thorough consideration of the individual student's abilities, strengths, needs, and interests, and is reviewed and amended in accordance with special education laws and regulations. The goal of the IEP is to lead the student toward high expectations and toward becoming a member of his or her community and the labor force. It also functions as the instrument that navigates the development of purposeful educational experiences. In doing so, the IEP outlines skills to be learned that will help the student realize his or her goals within the rigorous standards of the educational system as well as targeted postsecondary goals. The IEP explains and regulates services for each student individually. In addition, it assists teachers and other staff in identifying measurable, clearly-defined annual goals for each entitled student (Kansas State Department of Education, 2011).

Knowledge of self. Knowledge of self includes students' knowledge of their own disabilities, learning styles, strengths, dreams, goals, and necessary accommodations (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). In the current study, this knowledge is reflected in students' responses on the IEP Survey[®] and in their responses to journal prompts.

Learning disability. As stated in the Kansas State Department of Education Eligibility Indicators document (Kansas State Department of Education, 2012), a learning disability is

...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term shall not include

learning problems that are primarily the result of any of the following: (1) Visual, hearing, or motor, disabilities; (2) mental retardation; (3) emotional disturbance; or (4) environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (p. 19)

Other Health Impairment. The Kansas State Department of Education (2012) defines Other Health Impairment as

...having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment and that meets the following criteria: (1) is due to chronic or acute health problems, including asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and 2) adversely affects a child's educational performance. (p. 27)

Self-determination. A consensus definition of self-determination, which is employed in this study, has been established by researchers in the field (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998). The adopted definition is as follows:

Self-determination is 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. (Field et al., 1998, p. 2)

Overview of Methodology

This study was designed as a mixed methods investigation to determine how explicit self-advocacy instruction affects students' (a) knowledge of themselves in terms of disabilities and learning needs, (b) level of self-determination, and (c) degree of IEP meeting participation. Participants were selected from a cohort of eighth graders with disabilities at a suburban middle school in Kansas. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through surveys, journal entries, and observations embedded within one six-week data collection phase. For each student, a data story was developed to describe both quantitative and qualitative data in order to answer research questions. Then, data were analyzed for themes that emerged, which were then compared to research questions and literature on self-determination or self-advocacy and IEP meeting participation, knowledge of students' own disabilities, and knowledge of their rights.

Summary of the Study

This chapter provided background information and an introduction to the study. The problem the present study addressed was given, along with the significance and purpose of the study. Delimitations and assumptions were outlined and research questions were stated. Definition of terms was provided along with an overview of the methodology employed. The following chapter is a review of related scholarly literature. Chapter three contains a detailed discussion of the research design, population and sample, instruments used, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations. Chapter four provides the results of the study, and chapter five presents major findings and an interpretation of the results. Also provided are conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

This chapter introduces the rationale behind research exploring how explicit instruction influences the self-determination of students with disabilities and how the acquired knowledge and skills affect students' participation in IEP meetings. Previously, researchers conducted a content and methodological review of twenty-five self-advocacy intervention studies (Test, Fowler, Brewer, et al., 2005) and developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). The following review of literature represents research pertinent to the present study. Initially, the discussion provides a historical overview of the self-advocacy movement and then highlights legislation and policies supporting self-determination. Next, the components of self-advocacy are explained, followed by a discussion of the importance of self-advocacy instruction. Then, literature is reviewed supporting the IEP meeting as an authentic setting in which students can exercise self-advocacy skills. A review of identified barriers to self-advocacy instruction follows. Finally, recommendations for implementation of self-advocacy instruction are discussed.

Historical Overview of Self-Advocacy Movement

Due to the advocacy efforts of medical professionals, politicians, and parents, federal laws afford individuals with disabilities rights and safeguards to ensure they are provided a free and appropriate public education, in addition to necessary supports and accommodations to ensure their success in school and into postsecondary settings (Kansas State Department of Education, 2011). This was not always true for these individuals, however. Before 1775, individuals with disabilities did not experience a

dignified existence. These individuals were deemed unable to contribute to society and were often forced to live in institutions for their entire lives (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000). However, the ideals of democracy and egalitarianism quickly emerged in America during the 18th century and changes in attitudes began to surface. Wehmeyer, Bersani, et al. (2000) described three waves of the disability movement. The first wave, referred to as Professionalism, occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. Physicians viewed individuals with cognitive disabilities as sub-human or something to be feared or avoided. Physicians regarded these individuals as nuisances and associated them with crime, poverty, and the refuse of society. According to Wehmeyer, Bersani, et al. (2000), one such professional and prominent psychologist, Henry Goddard, concluded that individuals with cognitive disabilities should be segregated and sterilized as to control the spread of feeble-mindedness. Not all professionals shared this view, but there were essentially no opportunities for individuals with disabilities to exercise control in their lives. Because of the professionals' status and level of education, parents and the general public accepted the professionals' views and assumed they knew what was best for individuals with disabilities.

Wehmeyer, Bersani, et al. (2000) referred to the second wave of the disability movement as the Parent Movement, which occurred during the middle of the 20th century. During this time, advances in science and medicine after World War II significantly extended the life span of individuals with disabilities and altered the way disabilities were viewed. Due to the large number of disabled veterans, society began to place importance on rehabilitation and training. Consequently, stereotypes of disabilities became more benevolent, although still unpleasant. According to Wehmeyer, Bersani, et

al. (2000), rather than viewing individuals with disabilities as something to be feared or avoided, individuals with disabilities began to be viewed as victims of genetics who could be fixed and rehabilitated but who also needed to be pitied or protected. As a result, some professionals began advocating for special education for individuals with mental retardation, deafness, and blindness.

Wehmeyer, Bersani, et al. (2000) went on to describe how the post-World War II baby boom resulted in more births overall, which also meant an increase in the number of children with disabilities being born. Because of the changing perceptions of individuals with disabilities, parents began joining efforts to support each other, which later led to parents advocating for themselves and their children. Organizations such as The Arc and The United Cerebral Palsy Association emerged from this parent movement and professionals slowly began to recognize the importance of parents in making decisions for their children with disabilities. Through the 1970s, this parent movement radically changed the face of the disability movement resulting in rapid growth in legislative protections and services for individuals with disabilities, which was instrumental in the emergence of self-advocacy and self-determination (Wehmeyer, Bersani, et al., 2000).

The US Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which emphasized improving the rights of individuals who experienced discrimination due to their differences, provided a catalyst for the development of awareness and the promotion of self-advocacy for people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities who gained inspiration from civil rights strategies and victories of Black Americans and feminists began to advocate for disability rights (McCarthy, 2003). Also during the era of the Civil Rights Movement, family associations provided advocacy for and support to the federal

government in developing and endorsing practices for children with disabilities and their families, which laid the foundation for special education programs across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., p. 2). Political leaders and reformers began to advocate for the needs of these individuals, urging that they be taught skills that would foster them in becoming independent and productive citizens (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000).

As the second wave of the disability movement began to evolve, so did the belief that individuals with disabilities could speak for themselves. This paradigm shift resulted in the third wave of the disability movement, referred to as the Self-Advocacy movement, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s (Wehmeyer, Bersani, et al., 2000). The People First initiative has been regarded as the heart of the self-advocacy movement for individuals with disabilities (People First of West Virginia, 2011). In 1968, a parent organizational meeting was held in Sweden to provide an opportunity for parents to advocate for their young adult children with disabilities. However, the young adults at the meeting decided they wanted to share their ideas and speak for themselves so meetings were later held to provide opportunities for them to do so. Thus, the People First initiative was born. By 1974, the idea of self-advocacy had begun to flourish and spread into England, Canada, and ultimately Oregon USA where the first official People First Convention was held. Today self-advocacy is an international movement in 43 countries (People First of West Virginia, 2011). These international movements have led to the development of legislation and policies to promote and support individuals with disabilities in regard to self-advocacy and self-determination skills. The following information will specifically outline current legislation and policies directly linked to

special education reform and the emergence of a focus on self-determination for individuals with disabilities.

Legislation and Policies Supporting Self-Determination

Historically, it is evident in the literature that the recognition of human rights has materialized as a result of the humanization of individuals with disabilities to the belief that these individuals have a voice. While the self-advocacy movement began emerging, the birth and development of legislation and policies were also paving the way for improved programs and services for individuals with disabilities. Numerous examples exist of early key federal legislation that supported such progress. The following information delineates hallmark federal legislation from 1958 to the present.

The Captioned Films Act of 1958. The Captioned Films Act of 1958, Public Law 85-905, was designed to bring an understanding and appreciation of films to deaf persons. This act also played an integral role in the common and cultural development of hearing persons. Additionally, it sought to provide an enriched educational experience through films so that persons who were deaf could connect with the realities of their environment and enjoy a satisfying experience. The 1962 Public Law 87-715 provided funds for producing and distributing educational and training films for deaf persons, and for conducting research in the use of educational and training films.

Training of Professional Personnel Act of 1959 (PL 86-158). This legislation expanded teaching to include the education of the mentally retarded. It provided grants to public and non-profit higher learning institutions, in addition to state educational agencies. These funds provided assistance in training leaders to educate children with mental retardation.

Teachers of the Deaf Act of 1961 (PL 87-276). Public Law 87-276 made specially trained instructional personnel available to children who were deaf or hard of hearing. Grants in-aid were made available to accredited public and non-profit institutions of higher learning to provide and improve courses of study. Additionally, funding was provided to establish and maintain scholarships.

Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Health Centers Construction Act of 1963 (PL 88-164). Public Law 88-164 provided grant assistance for the construction of research centers and facilities devoted to what was then termed mentally retarded individuals. The Act also assisted in improving mental health by way of grants for construction of community mental health centers.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10). Public Law 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Act, was aimed at strengthening and improving the quality of educational opportunities for students in elementary and secondary schools. Specifically, it appropriated funds for instructional materials and textbooks, and provided financial assistance to local educational agencies for educating children of low income families. In addition, it authorized appropriations for the development of auxiliary educational centers and services, as well as the development and establishment of commendable educational programs to operate as models for conventional school programs. Grants were also authorized to universities and colleges, to public or private agencies and organizations, and to individuals for research in the field of education to develop sound educational practices.

Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act of 1968 (PL 90-538). Public Law 90-538, the Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act of

1968 provided funding for model preschool program centers across the nation to help young children with disabilities. The Economic Opportunities Amendments of 1972 (PL 92-424) authorized support for and increased Head Start enrollment for young children with disabilities, ensuring that no less than ten percent of the enrollment opportunities in Headstart programs would be available for children with disabilities. These and other weighty federal laws initiated new opportunities for children with disabilities and their families (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

Pioneering court rulings also advanced educational entitlements for children with disabilities, as evidenced by the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth* (1971) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), which established the obligation of states and districts to educate children with disabilities. Accordingly, the educational entitlement of every child with a disability is established in the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

A milestone federal law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (also known as Public Law 94-142), was passed in 1975, to address Congressional concerns for the quality of education for students with disabilities. At that time, more than half of all US children with disabilities were denied an appropriate education and more than one million children with disabilities were excluded completely from the education system. Public Law 94-142 guaranteed each child with a disability in every state and local education agency nationwide a free, appropriate public education. The law presented an influential national undertaking to improve educational accessibility for children with disabilities. It also protected the rights of children with disabilities and their parents and

ensured efficacy and assessment of instructional efforts for all children with disabilities. In addition, the law financially assisted states and districts in providing an education for all children with disabilities. Over the last quarter of the 20th century, the focus of improved access became the guiding philosophy for continued progress in the education of children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., p. 2-3). One of the advances in special education was a focus on the promotion of self-determination with regard to students with disabilities.

According to Ward (2005), special education research and practice began focusing on promoting the self-determination of students with disabilities in the late 1980s. In 1988, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) self-determination initiative was born, which received support from several leaders in the disability field. The purpose of the initiative was to focus on system-wide activities aimed at including consumers in decision-making to facilitate future leadership among individuals with disabilities (Ward, 2005). Between 1990 and 1996, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded numerous projects with the intent of developing practices and programs that would advance self-determination for youth with disabilities (as cited in Ward & Kohler, 1996). In 1992, OSEP funded research grants aimed at developing and evaluating self-determination models, assessment methods, materials, and strategies connected to the models. Due essentially to this federal spotlight on and funding to endorse self-determination with youth with disabilities, copious resources became accessible to support instruction to realize this outcome (Wehmeyer, Field, Doren, & Mason, 2004). Throughout the 1990s and beyond, improvements in then current federal legislation evolved, which resulted in

laws that would ensure the success of students with disabilities throughout their academic careers and into postsecondary endeavors. Namely, in 1990, an amendment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act changed the name to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 and 2004 moved beyond providing access to public school programs to improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). With it came a reiteration of the importance of student involvement in the planning of their own Individualized Education Programs (IEP) when postsecondary goals and pursuits are being explored. More specifically, this law required that students with disabilities are invited to their IEP meetings beginning at age fourteen when transition issues are discussed. Additionally, this law mandated that students are included in the planning process at age sixteen ensuring their unique interests become the focus of postsecondary planning (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). As resources became available to educators providing an avenue to promote and support self-advocacy and self-determination with students, researchers began conducting studies on the efficacy of such instruction. While the literature on self-advocacy instruction began increasing, some researchers sought to clarify the concept of self-advocacy. The following information will describe how researchers developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy.

Components of Self-Advocacy

Based on a comprehensive review of literature on self-advocacy and input from stakeholders, Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005) developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy. In it, they suggested four overarching components including: (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) communication, and (d) leadership.

These researchers considered knowledge of self and knowledge of rights fundamental traits of self-advocacy and the first step toward self-advocacy. Individuals must understand themselves, their needs, and their rights as a citizen and as an individual with a disability receiving services under federal law, before they are able to communicate to others what they want and need. Communication is regarded as critical to self-advocacy because individuals must be able to convey their wants and needs effectively. Leadership facilitates movement from advocating for oneself to advocating collectively for others with mutual concerns. These researchers believed leadership not only encompasses self-advocacy such as that demonstrated in an IEP meeting, but also demonstrates advocacy for the rights of others. To become a successful self-advocate, the authors emphasized it is not necessary to engage in the leadership component, as an individual can be an effective self-advocate without leading others (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005).

As the concepts of self-advocacy and self-determination became more prevalent in the literature and with legislative focus on students having more access to the general education curriculum, educators began recognizing the importance of promoting self-advocacy and self-determination among their students with disabilities. Since students with disabilities are in the general education classroom more often now than in the past, it is important that educators provide opportunities to teach students self-determination skills (Test et al., 2004). Researchers have posited that for students with disabilities, self-determination skills are significant factors in leading successful lives after high school and have asserted that limited development of self-determination skills contributes to poor post-secondary outcomes for these students (Izzo & Lamb, 2003). They stated

The culture of America is strongly rooted in the individual's ability to exercise power, control, and influence within their community. Yet, people with disabilities are, too often, denied the opportunity to take risks and make decisions and may not develop skills leading to enhanced self-determination. (Izzo & Lamb, 2003, p. 73)

Izzo and Lamb (2003) stressed the need for students with disabilities to acquire self-determination skills in high school and emphasized how this has significant implications within vocation settings. Other scholars (Brugnaró & Timmons, 2007) supported this view and have maintained that self-determination is an essential component in acquiring employment and in job satisfaction and success. Brugnaró and Timmons (2007) developed a document, which outlined how self-determination should guide employment support for individuals with disabilities. They indicated that freedom to take risks and make choices has not always been available to these individuals so these skills must be learned. By promoting self-determination in the employment seeking process, it broadens job seekers' independence and increases the prospect of employment success.

Researchers who have supported the importance of instructing students in self-determination in the school setting have studied various benefits. Wood et al. (2004) developed an article with suggestions for including self-advocacy instruction with students with disabilities as a way to increase students' inclusion in classroom instruction. The article outlined the skills that comprise self-determination, presented guidance on which skills to teach, and provided specific examples of targeting self-determination skills on IEP goals and objectives. The authors stressed the importance of

self-determination instruction in school. For example, teaching a student about his rights under IDEA and how to be a self-advocate with his teachers may help him in the future when he needs to learn about his rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and practice self-advocacy with his employer.

The following information outlines the importance of promoting self-determination and self-advocacy instruction as seen in the literature. The discussion reviews literature supporting the importance of self-advocacy skills among students with disabilities in secondary and post-secondary settings.

Importance of Promoting Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Instruction

Under IDEA, schools are mandated to provide accommodations and specially designed instruction to students with disabilities. However, in the post-secondary setting, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 only mandate access to higher education. Individuals with disabilities are expected to take the responsibility upon themselves to request accommodations. Unfortunately, students with disabilities who choose to go to college often enter the arena with limited skills in self-determination and self-advocacy because their parents and high school educators had taken over the task of advocating for them (Izzo et al., 2001). Researchers studied the climate for students with disabilities within postsecondary educational settings as measured by the perceptions of students and the staff who instruct them (Izzo et al., 2001). The study involved a quantitative survey to assess the experiences of 665 faculty and students. The authors also utilized in-depth focus groups to gain perspectives of 24 faculty and 33 students with and without disabilities. They found two conditions that played a role in creating positive experiences were students who approached faculty

early to explain why they needed accommodations, and faculty who integrated a variety of teaching methods and strategies into their instruction to address diverse student learning styles. The authors found that college students with disabilities reported unease requesting accommodations from their instructors. Furthermore, faculty often did not grasp the nature of disabilities nor recognize what accommodations were considered reasonable. To exacerbate the problem, students themselves lacked understanding of their own disabilities in order to explain how certain accommodations would level the playing field in terms of access to the educational setting without creating an unfair advantage over other students. The authors concluded that, as young people with disabilities enter adulthood, it is necessary for them to become self-determined so they can be actively involved in decisions related to their living arrangements and employment in their communities.

Other researchers have supported this notion as well. For example, Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) measured the degree of self-determination of 80 students with mild mental retardation or learning disabilities in their last year of high school and again one year after high school. Self-determination was measured by The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] during students' last year of high school. A follow-up survey, which was mailed to participants' parents one year later, included questions with reference to student living arrangements, past and current employment status, postsecondary education level, and community integration outcomes. Students who were more likely to have expressed a preference to live outside the family home, to have a bank account, and to be gainfully employed were among those with higher self-determination. One year after high school graduation, 80% of students with high self-

determination were employed, compared to 43% of students with low self-determination. Among students who were employed after high school, those with higher self-determination earned a significantly higher wage than their peers with lower self-determination.

Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) surveyed 94 students with mental retardation or learning disabilities in seven states one year and three years after high school graduation to examine whether self-determination had an influence on adult outcomes. Seventy-seven students had participated in both the first year and third year study and 17 participated only in the third year of the study. Surveys included questions related to adult outcomes such as employment, living arrangements, and financial independence. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] was used to measure student levels of self-determination.

When adult outcomes were compared in the Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) study between participants with low self-determination scores and those with high self-determination scores, the researchers found significant differences between the two groups. In addition, they found significant differences from the first-year follow up to the third-year follow-up for participants with both high and low self-determination scores. For example, in major areas of financial independence on year one follow-up, results indicated significant relations between self-determination status and maintaining a bank account, indicating that participants with high self-determination scores were maintaining a bank account more than what was typically expected. In addition, the number of participants in the same group who were paying for their own groceries was significantly higher in year three than in year one. Furthermore, based on the McNemar test for

significance of changes, only participants in the high self-determination group experienced significant improvements in access to overall job benefits ($p = .021$), vacation leave ($p = .002$), and sick leave ($p = .008$) from year one to year three. Also, there were fewer participants who lost job-related benefits and more first time recipients of benefits among those in the high self-determination group, an outcome not shared by their counterparts in the low self-determination group. By one year after high school, students in the high self-determination group were more likely, when compared to students in the low self-determination group, to have moved away from their high school living situation. By the third year, they were still more likely to live somewhere other than their high school living situation and were significantly more likely to live on their own than their peers in the low self-determination group. Students in the high self-determination group were also more likely to be employed by the first year follow-up, and had previous full or part-time employment or job training by year three when compared to the low self-determination group, although results were not statistically significant.

Overall, the high self-determination group in the Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) study fared more positively on every question on the survey than did the low self-determination group, indicating that self-determination status did influence individuals' adult outcomes. While self-determination status did not affect differences in all areas or on all items, a common trend revealed participants in the high self-determination group were attaining more successful outcomes than the low self-determination group. These findings support ongoing efforts to enhance self-determination concerning positive

transition outcomes. Furthermore, the results of the study emphasized the prospective advantage to students who graduate from high school as self-determined individuals.

Thoma and Getzel (2005) conducted a series of focus groups with thirty-four college students with disabilities to gain their perspectives on the importance of self-determination skills to their success in the post-secondary setting. Participants ranged in age from eighteen to forty-eight and came from varied cultural backgrounds. Sixteen different disabilities were represented among the students, with the majority of students reportedly having a learning disability (20.6%), ADHD (14.8%), or cerebral palsy (17.6%). Both researchers facilitated each of the six groups. One adult served as a moderator while the other adult served as a scribe who took notes on the focus group sessions and summarized the key discussion points. Summarized information was verified with group members to ensure accuracy and to allow opportunity to elaborate. Following each group session, the moderator and scribe debriefed the session and isolated common themes among the participants' responses. After developing each of the summaries, the researchers analyzed the information and coded the emergent themes to answer specific research questions. First, the researchers sought to identify which skills students described as important to their success in the post-secondary setting. Many students reported initially failing a class because they had not self-disclosed their disability and then later choosing to self-advocate for their necessary accommodations. Each of the students distinguished many of the important components of self-determination including problem-solving skills, goal setting, learning about oneself and one's disability, and self-management. Participants identified problem-solving skills as vital because each person learns differently and finding what works happened through

trial and error. Participants reported that understanding their learning styles and their disabilities was very important because others failed to understand their disabilities and capabilities so it required education on their part. Unfortunately, however, these students reportedly had not learned about their own disabilities prior to entering the post-secondary setting and had to educate themselves through the internet, support groups, and doctors. All participants placed value on setting goals, and one individual reported that learning about the success stories of celebrities and famous individuals with the same disability provided encouragement in setting and achieving personal goals. All participants identified self-management as important, which included time management, organization skills, and study skills.

Thoma and Getzel (2005) also set out to determine how participants learned these skills. Respondents' most frequently reported method was through trial and error. Other avenues for learning self-determination skills included learning about rights through peers, role models, and mentors, and through education from their parents. The final question researchers in this study sought to answer was what suggestions participants had for training high school students with disabilities. The participants provided numerous suggestions, which were grouped into three themes including the parents' role, the age to begin teaching self-determination skills, and the format for the training. Suggestions for the role of parents included being encouraging, understanding, and supportive. Participants unanimously agreed that skills should be taught as early as possible with most reporting that instruction should begin no later than ninth or tenth grade. Concerning the format for training, participants provided numerous suggestions, but it was concluded through one participant's comment that instruction should "...use all

formats for all learning styles” (p. 239). Overall, their responses indicated that instruction should include practical, real-life activities.

To summarize, researchers who have studied how self-determination skills influence students in secondary, post-secondary, and adult settings have found that self-determination skills are key to positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities. College students with disabilities have recognized self-determination skills as important to their success in post-secondary settings but have indicated they did not acquire these skills in high school through explicit instruction but rather learned the skills on their own. Students also indicated that instruction in these skills is necessary and should occur as early as possible in their educational careers. The following information will provide a discussion of literature to reiterate the importance of providing instruction in order for students with disabilities to acquire self-determination skills. Additionally, the literature reviewed will provide specificity in relation to the skills necessary for student success, and will propose appropriate settings, such as the IEP meeting, in which students may acquire and practice self-determination skills.

The IEP Meeting as an Authentic Setting to Exercise Self-Determination

The level of one’s self-determination skills has been associated with the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, and researchers have identified that one of the reasons students with disabilities do not experience success when they proceed into postsecondary settings and adulthood is that the educational process has not adequately prepared them to become self-determined individuals (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001). In their overview of self-determination, Wehmeyer & Schalock (2001) provided recommendations for instruction to promote self-advocacy and that it should focus on

how to advocate and for what to advocate. The authors concluded that one principally important topic on which students with disabilities should receive instruction includes the education and transition process and their rights within the system. Students can also be taught about their rights under IDEA and about the purpose of the decision-making process involved in transition as they approach transition-age. To address instructing students how to advocate, they recommended that instructional strategies should include an emphasis on assertive communication versus aggressive communication. In addition, students must receive instruction in how to communicate effectively in different situations such as one-on-one, small group, and large group settings. Students should also understand how to negotiate, use persuasion, compromise, and be an active listener. These skills are closely connected to acquiring and developing other self-determination skills such as understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, as self-awareness is a central building block if one is to utilize such techniques as compromise and negotiation to achieve a desired outcome. For students to develop self-awareness and self-knowledge, they must also have a basic understanding of how to employ these distinctive qualities to affect favorably their quality of life. To underscore the importance of providing students with authentic settings in which to acquire and practice self-determination skills, Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001) stated, "Students don't learn what they can or can't do from lectures, role playing, social skills simulations, or any other more traditional teacher-directed instructional activities. They learn, as do all people, through their own interpretation of events and experiences" (p. 13).

One authentic setting or event in which students could be allowed to learn and practice self-determination skills is the IEP meeting. For example, Staab (2010)

conducted a series of mini-case studies of four high school students with learning disabilities to examine how their self-determination skills influenced the degree to which they participated in their IEP meetings. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] was used to measure the students' level of self-determination skills at the beginning of the study. Students were also interviewed before their IEP meetings to determine their level of understanding related to their IEP, how they had qualified for an IEP, the purpose of the IEP, and what the IEP did for them. In addition, they were asked questions about what happened at their previous IEP meeting, their role at the IEP meeting, and the purposes of the IEP meeting. A review of student scores on the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] and responses to the initial interview indicated that students as a whole demonstrated a limited understanding about their IEP documents and their role at IEP meetings. Further analyses indicated that students with both high self-determination scores and low self-determination scores gave a variety of responses in the initial interview that ranged from no knowledge of the topic to responses containing good knowledge. Of the four students in the study, only one provided the meaning for the acronym IEP but none of the students could explain what the document was. When asked about their previous IEP meetings, the students recollected various topics with accuracy. When asked about their roles in their IEP meetings, the students with higher self-determination scores gave very dissimilar responses from each other; one student indicated an accurate response while the other student indicated he did not know his role. The students with lower self-determination scores gave responses containing partial knowledge, which was similar to one of the high scoring students.

At the IEP meetings, Staab (2010) observed the students to determine the degree to which they demonstrated self-determination skills. After reviewing relevant data, a pattern was not evident across student participants. During the interviews with students subsequent to their IEP meetings, it was apparent that students as a whole continued to demonstrate limited understanding of their IEPs. However, their responses to questions about their IEP meetings did reflect accurate recollections of what had transpired. In addition, it was noted that students with higher self-determination scores gave a greater number of accurate responses than the students with lower self-determination scores gave. Further, students were asked about the responsibilities they had according to their IEP. The students with higher self-determination scores gave differing responses in that one demonstrated partial knowledge and the other demonstrated unrelated knowledge. Partial knowledge indicated the student gave accurate responses with some information, and unrelated knowledge indicated the student gave information irrelevant to the question. Both students with lower self-determination scores gave responses that contained partial knowledge as well. When asked about what their IEP said about them as a learner and how they would change their IEP to make it more effective, all students gave varied responses, which did not appear to be influenced by their self-determination scores. When asked about what had happened at the recently attended IEP meeting, what they did at the IEP meeting, and who attended the IEP meeting, all students gave responses with partial knowledge and one gave a response containing good knowledge. Good knowledge indicated the student gave an accurate and detailed response with descriptive information. Overall, all students provided responses to questions during the follow-up interview that demonstrated more knowledge than their responses during the

initial interview. This suggested that students might have been able to acquire some information about their IEPs and IEP meetings through their attendance at the meetings (Staab, 2010).

In summary, the findings of Staab's (2010) study did not support a significant relationship between students' scores on the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] and the students' use of self-determination skills during their IEP meetings, suggesting that possession of strong self-determination skills does not guarantee students know how to practice them. The author concluded that the IEP meeting can be an important avenue for students to practice self-determination skills, but without an adequate understanding of the IEP and their role in the IEP meeting, students find themselves in a setting in which they are unable to participate meaningfully. The author recommended that students need a program of instruction to impart necessary skills in order for them to do so (Staab, 2010).

Similarly, Trainor (2005) conducted a qualitative study to examine the perceptions of 15 African American, European American, and Hispanic American adolescents with learning disabilities regarding opportunities to exercise self-determination during transition IEP meetings. Data collected included reviews of participants' IEPs, observations of participants' IEP meetings, focus group interviews, and individual follow-up interviews. Field notes taken throughout the data collection periods were also utilized. The researcher observed students at their IEP meetings in which transition topics were discussed to note how participants practiced self-determination skills and how they participated in their transition planning. The researcher recorded students' comments and nonverbal communication during the

meetings and took an additional detailed set of field notes following each observation to reflect the researcher's thoughts and interpretations of students' interactions, words, and actions during the meetings. Informal focus groups occurred with individual sets of student participants based on their racial or ethnic identification; a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions was utilized to guide topics of discussion. Follow-up interviews were conducted with each student to allow participants the opportunity to clarify their responses or elaborate upon them, and to allow the researcher to verify personal impressions. Focus group and follow-up interview data were analyzed for recurring themes and categories connected to self-determination. Analysis of data revealed five themes regarding self-determination during the transition planning process, which included: (a) missing connections between IEPs and postsecondary plans, (b) participation on the periphery, (c) relying on family for transition planning, (d) attempting self-determination, and (e) actualizing self-determination efforts.

Overall, student participants in the Trainor (2005) study expressed that the bulk of their interactions in IEP meetings were steered by adult expectations. Participants across groups reported they typically did not discuss transition plans with their teachers or other school staff, but indicated they did not feel frustrated because of their limited involvement. On a positive note, participants across groups exhibited self-determination skills during the interview process, including identifying postsecondary education goals and each identified at least one career goal. Participants also were able to identify their personal strengths and weakness by recognizing academic difficulties and learning problems. Observation data showed that teachers referred to students' strengths and weaknesses in IEP meetings, but the weaknesses became the center of the discussions.

Student responses across groups confirmed this impression, as students indicated they sometimes experienced embarrassment and humiliation in the IEP meetings. In addition, across groups, participants felt their home environments fostered self-determination, yet they discussed barriers to self-determination at school. Student participants conveyed a lack of response on the teachers' part to their requests or questions about future goals. Overall, students identified themselves as recipients in their transition planning and IEP meetings rather than contributors. Recognizing this problem, other researchers have examined how students with disabilities can become more actively involved in the transition planning process and in IEP meetings, and how self-determination skills can play a role. Studies have provided evidence of the importance of self-determination to the transition planning process for students with disabilities.

One such study by Wehmeyer et al. (2007) examined the relationship between skills related to self-determination and student transition planning knowledge. Participants in the study were 180 high school students receiving special education services from 25 school districts in four states. Students ranged in age from 14 to 21 years and were eligible for special education under various disability categories. The majority of students (45%) were identified as having mental retardation; the remainder of the disability categories represented in the study included learning disability, autism, emotional or behavioral disorders, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, or visual impairment. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] was utilized to assess student self-determination and student knowledge and skills were measured by a 20-item questionnaire focused on student knowledge and skills concerning the IEP and transition planning process, self-advocacy, goal setting, decision-making, and team

planning skills. Two questions were added to this questionnaire for both the pre- and posttests, which inquired about whether the students attended their previous IEP meeting and whether they knew at least one transition goal from their previous IEP meeting. Analysis of the scores on the questionnaire showed that the average frequency correct was less than 14, suggesting that students needed to be educated on the transition planning process and its significance to their lives. A majority of students reported they had attended their previous IEP meeting, but only 63% of students knew at least one of their transition goals. Only 61% of students reported they had both attended their previous IEP meeting and knew their transition goals, which suggested that students may not have been active participants in their IEP meetings. The role of disability status was less important in predicting overall transition knowledge and skills; global self-determination was the dominant predictor variable. When subdomain scores on the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] were analyzed, self-regulation was the most significant predictor. Overall, it was evident that self-determination and, specifically, student self-realization and self-regulation were the most significant contributors to student transition planning knowledge and skills. The findings provided further support of the value of involving students in educational planning and promoting self-determination skills, whereby providing them with the competence to be effective participants in the transition planning process and in their IEP meetings.

The IEP process does not have to be an awkward experience for students. In fact, numerous studies have supported the notion that students can become meaningful participants in their own IEP meetings. Strong evidence exists suggesting that students are able to acquire self-advocacy skills and self-determination skills when they are given

proper instruction and the opportunity to practice the skills. The following studies demonstrate the efficacy of instruction with students in college, in high school, and in middle school.

Roffman, Herzog, and Wershba-Gershon (1994) studied thirty-six first-year college students with low average cognitive skills. Nineteen of the students participated in a course designed to promote self-understanding of learning disabilities and self-advocacy skills. Seventeen of the students who did not participate in the course served as a control group. Pre and post questionnaires were given to both groups to measure student learning in the course. Mock interviews were also conducted with both groups to assess students' ability to apply skills they had learned in the course. Researchers found that those students who learned about their disabilities and developed strategies to address their weaknesses were able to self-advocate significantly better than students who had not participated in the course. More importantly, students' functioning in the work place was examined one year later and researchers found that the effects of the course were still positively affecting students' work performance. While this evidence exists that instruction in self-advocacy was effective with college level students, other researchers have studied the efficacy of instruction with high school and middle school students to examine its impact on students' IEP meeting participation.

One such study by Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al. (2006) underscored the importance of teaching students with disabilities effective IEP meeting participation skills to enhance their contribution and to result in more effectual IEP meetings. They also identified barriers that hinder student involvement. These researchers sought to gain information about the nature of student and adult contribution in teacher-directed IEP

meetings at middle schools and high schools. They utilized direct observation and post meeting surveys of 627 IEP team members across 109 IEP meetings to determine the nature and degree of student involvement, participants' perceptions and prior knowledge of the IEP meetings, and the participants' perceptions of their behavior. Observers used 10-second momentary time sampling to determine the percentage of intervals that IEP team members talked during the meetings. Other behaviors observed during the meetings included 12 essential student leadership steps such as, introducing self and team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing past goals and progress; asking for feedback; asking questions; dealing with differences in opinion; stating needed support; expressing interests, skills, and limits; expressing options and goals; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone. Observers assessed the students in relation to these behaviors and documented whether the behavior was independent or prompted. Results showed that special education teachers talked 51% of the time and students spoke only 3% of the time during the IEP meetings. Of the 12 essential student leadership behaviors, 94% of the students did not engage in nine of them. Students expressed interests in less than half of the meetings, expressed options and goals in less than one-third of the meetings, and expressed skills and limits in only 20% of the meetings. No students were observed stating the purpose of the meeting, asking for feedback, or closing the meeting by thanking everyone.

The survey utilized in the Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al. (2006) study examined perceptions with regard to four domains: prior knowledge, transition issues, participants' meeting behavior, and perceptions of the IEP meeting which they had just attended. At the end of each IEP meeting, adult participants completed the survey to rate

the nature of their participation or to assess their perception of the meeting. Students completed a similar questionnaire, which was written in simpler language than the adult survey, and were provided appropriate accommodations and supports as needed to facilitate comprehension of each question. Results indicated that special education teachers directed the IEP process, dominated the conversations, and appeared to have the highest degree of satisfaction with the events that occurred and issues that arose during the IEP meetings. Almost 40% of the special education teachers indicated that students participated during the IEP meeting to a large degree; however, this was in pointed contradiction to the evidence. Almost one quarter of students (21.9%) reported they had no dialogue with a teacher about the IEP meeting prior to the meeting while only some special education teachers (15.9%) reported they had not had a dialogue with the student about the IEP meeting prior to the meeting. Overall, students reported significantly lower prior knowledge than all the other IEP meeting participants.

In their study, Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al. (2006) described student presence at IEP meetings as simply tokenism because of very low levels of student involvement and low student attitudes about their IEP meetings. Students attended the meetings but did not engage in important discussions or in educational planning. Results suggested that various opportunities for student engagement existed, but the teacher-directed meeting format did not facilitate student engagement. Furthermore, students in the study reportedly left the meetings feeling less respected and less comfortable sharing their opinions at the meetings than anyone else in attendance. The authors concluded students need to learn about the IEP process and the nature of their role prior to attending their IEP meetings. Team members also need to learn how to foster student engagement

in the meeting and need to establish expectations for active student involvement in IEP meetings.

Building upon these findings, Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, et al. (2006) conducted a study to establish the effectiveness of an instructional curriculum package, The Self-Directed IEP, designed to teach students about the IEP process and their role in IEP meetings. They utilized a pre/posttest control and intervention design with 130 secondary students who were assigned to either an intervention group or a control group. A few weeks prior to the IEP meetings, teachers instructed students in the treatment group and then briefly reviewed the leadership steps with each student prior to their meeting. Students in both groups were observed at their IEP meetings in 10-second increments to measure the percentage of time that IEP team members talked. Results showed that students who received instruction with the Self-Directed IEP were much more likely to start the IEP meeting than students who had not received instruction and talked more than twice as much in the IEP meetings. Students who had received instruction also employed significantly more IEP meeting leadership steps; through post-IEP meeting surveys, the students reflected significantly higher positive perceptions of their IEP meetings.

Arndt et al., (2006) also examined how the Self-Directed IEP program affected students' participation in IEP meetings. Participants were five high school students with disabilities. Each student was observed at a real IEP meeting and later at one to three simulated IEP meetings to determine the level of student participation. Results indicated a functional relationship between the provision of the Self-Directed IEP and increases in student contribution in simulated IEP meetings. Students were also able to demonstrate

the generalization of skills they had learned to their real IEP meeting and reportedly felt they played an influential role in planning for their futures. The two studies just discussed have outlined how the Self-Directed IEP curriculum affected student IEP meeting participation. The next studies discuss how other curricula, both published and unpublished, have shown to impact the nature and degree of students' IEP meeting participation.

Phillips (1990) studied how the first step of the Self-Advocacy Plan, a four-step plan developed by the author to teach students to become self-advocates, affected fifteen adolescents with learning disabilities. The plan was designed to teach students to become active learners by identifying their own learning styles, communicating their learning styles to others, and adapting to various situations and tasks. The four steps were designed to take place over a student's entire high school career to prepare him or her for the post-secondary setting. Students in the study began step one of the plan by attending a meeting to prepare for the transition to high school. At the meeting, the special education teacher shared with the team a summary of the student's strengths and needs, which was prepared with the student's input. Over an eight month period, students also participated in a 10-week learning disabilities seminar and small group discussions about their own learning styles and strategies. Students kept a log documenting the effectiveness of strategies, which they later would use at their IEP meeting in the second step of the plan in tenth grade. The study utilized qualitative data collection and analysis, which included field notes, student logs, and open-ended interviews with students, parents, and teachers. Results indicated that the Self-Advocacy Plan effectively increased student awareness of their disabilities and their role as a learner, as well as

increased their awareness of educational opportunities. Students in the study also approached teachers more frequently to request accommodations and reflected a feeling of more responsibility for their education.

Studies have also demonstrated positive results with younger students. For example, Test and Neale (2004) investigated the effects of instructing four middle school students with disabilities to participate actively in their IEP meetings using The Self-Advocacy Strategy, a motivation and self-determination strategy designed to prepare students to participate in transition planning IEP meetings. Three boys and one girl in eighth grade who had never attended their previous IEP meetings participated in the study. The intervention occurred in the special education classroom where each student received individual instruction for approximately two weeks. Prior to the intervention, each student completed the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] as a pretest. One of the researchers read aloud each question as students marked their responses. Next, students were asked ten probe questions related to their learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. The intervention began with the first of seven stages in which the students were taught ten lessons ranging from 20 to 45 minutes in length. The ten probe questions were given to students at specific places of mastery outlined in the Self-Advocacy Strategy. After all four students had completed the intervention, an IEP meeting was held for each student at which time the ten probe questions were addressed and their IEPs were reviewed and modified to reflect changes indicated by the student and the IEP team. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] was administered to students again as a posttest.

Results of the Test and Neale (2004) study demonstrated that all four students made gains in their scores on the ten probe questions as well as their scores on the Arc's

Self-Determination Scale[®] after having received the intervention. Due to the small sample size, however, a non-parametric test was used to determine if the total self-determination scores from pretest to posttest was statistically significant. The results indicated that posttest scores were not significantly higher than pretest scores (Wilcoxon $Z = -1.83$, $p = .068$). Nevertheless, the results demonstrated a purposeful relationship between The Self-Advocacy Strategy and the quality of students' input in the IEP meeting, as students were able to offer more descriptive information related to their IEPs after receiving the intervention.

Comparably, Hammer (2004) conducted a study with three students with special needs who attended a private school for students with learning difficulties and related challenges. Students ranged in age from 12 years, 11 months to 13 years, 4 months. The students participated in a self-contained classroom setting consisting of eight students, one certified teacher, and one teaching assistant. The certified teacher was the researcher and taught students using the Self-Advocacy Strategy, which involved five steps. The first step aimed to promote effective student involvement in the IEP process by requiring the student to complete an inventory of personal learning strengths, weaknesses, goals and interests, and choices for classroom learning. The completed inventory in the form of ten probe questions was then used as a reference for the student during the IEP conference. The second step involved developing communication skills such as listening to others and responding at appropriate times. Closely connected to step 3, the fourth step focused on how and when to ask questions during a conference. Finally, the last strategy taught the student how to summarize the goals that would be pinpointed during the following school year. Using the inventory students completed in step 1, data

regarding the frequency of student participation were collected during the students' IEP conference and focused on the frequency of student participation. Responses were recorded as positive, negative, or irrelevant. The researcher used a multiple-baseline-across-subject design to examine the effects of the self-advocacy strategy. After the intervention, all three students were able to describe their strengths and weakness and demonstrated increased involvement with writing goals than before the intervention. Overall, the Self-Advocacy Strategy proved to be effective in increasing students' number of positive appropriate responses during the IEP conferences.

To uncover the benefits of and barriers to implementing student-led IEP meetings, Danneker and Bottge (2009) designed a training package directed at developing the leadership skills of elementary students during their IEP meetings. Six 20-minute lessons were created through the guidance of curricula used in previous studies. The lessons addressed topics including: (a) introducing the purpose, content, and arrangement of the IEP and generating invitations to the meetings; (b) identifying student's strengths, needs, and interests; (c) exploring current IEPs to appraise progress on current goals; and (d) adjusting or adding goals and pinpointing beneficial accommodations and modifications. The final segment of the training focused on preparing and practicing a script for students to utilize during their IEP meetings. The authors conducted three sets of interviews with students, parents, and teachers and observed all IEP meetings. Pre-intervention interviews centered on previous experience with IEP meetings, the student's school experience, and the student's strengths, needs, and interests. The second set of interviews occurred within two weeks after each student's IEP meeting. Students were asked to explain their experience and feelings about their participation in the IEP meeting and

adults were asked to compare IEP meetings in which a student participated to those they had attended in the past when the student was not present. To obtain insight about potential long-term effects of student participation on student behavior and adult perceptions, subsequent meetings occurred approximately four months after they had been provided the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Results showed several benefits of students assuming leadership roles in their IEP meetings. For example, in initial interviews, students did not have knowledge of their IEP and were unable to identify their IEP goals. In interviews following the IEP meetings, all students could accurately identify their IEP goals and reportedly felt positive about their participation in the IEP meetings. The student became the focus of the process and developed a feeling of ownership of the IEP goals. In addition, students had the opportunity to advocate for themselves in an authentic setting and even added information that was not part of the script.

With regard to adult perceptions, prior to the Danneker and Bottge (2009) study, adult participants had not understood the merit of allowing elementary students to be involved in their IEP meetings. After participating in a student-led IEP meeting, however, all parents expressed a desire for their students' continued inclusion and involvement in future IEP meetings. Adults also observed increased mutual problem solving, as the communication during the meetings included more joint involvement from team members than the traditional IEP process in which the special educator typically leads the majority of discussion. All team members shared information with the student and with each other, which appeared to foster partnership and collective problem-solving. Overall, Danneker and Bottge (2009) concluded that students' presence and active

participation in the IEP meetings positively influenced the tone of the meetings, and students expressed solid responses regarding IEP ownership and their entitlement of team membership. Furthermore, all parents reported their child had a greater feeling of empowerment and pride as a result of their taking on a leadership role at the IEP meeting. The results of the study also demonstrated that students who received as little as 120 minutes of instruction could be equipped to lead their IEP meetings.

Another study provided evidence that middle school students with disabilities were able to learn self-advocacy skills to improve their quality of contributions in their IEP meeting. Meglemre (2010) conducted a study with 40 eighth grade students with learning disabilities to explore how instruction in self-advocacy skills would influence student knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, comfort with communicating needs to others, and student participation in their transition IEP meetings. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design with an equal number of students assigned to either an intervention group or control group. Students completed a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire with items related to knowledge of their strengths, weaknesses, and accommodations. Additional questions related to their degree of comfort with communicating their needs with their teachers. For students in the intervention group, the questionnaire included three open-ended prompts asking students to describe what they had learned through the intervention curriculum. The students' IEPs were also compared to their questionnaire responses to ascertain the accuracy of students' understanding of their disability and accommodations. Through the self-advocacy curriculum, students learned about their disabilities and accommodations. They also learned how to advocate for their needs. A culminating project, which was designed to

assist students in participating in their transition IEP meeting, involved writing an essay and creating a poster about their strengths, weakness, disabilities, accommodations, and school and career goals.

After the self-advocacy curriculum had been implemented in the Meglemre (2010) study, students were observed at their IEP meetings in which transition to high school was the focus. Two researchers observed students in each IEP meeting using an observation protocol, which included a rating scale and a chart for recording the frequency with which students demonstrated self-advocacy skills they had learned through the intervention curriculum. First, the scores of the two raters were averaged and then compared to the mean scores of each skill for both groups to determine if students from the intervention group initiated communication more often than students from the control group did. In the IEP meetings, students in the intervention group showed a noticeable difference in describing their disability, which was the only measure on the rating scaled that showed a significant difference between the two groups.

Students in the intervention group in the Meglemre (2010) study were asked on the questionnaire what they had learned about their disability that they did not know before. Of the 20 students who answered the question, only seven acknowledged they had a disability, six identified accommodations that help them in school, three mentioned strengths, two provided positive statements but did not mention their disability, and two provided negative responses alluding they did not learn anything from the intervention.

In the transition meetings, some students who did not initially describe their needed accommodations were asked about the nature of support they received in middle school. When the groups were compared, there was a difference between their mean

scores for describing accommodations. However, independent samples *t*-test did not show a significant difference. There was little difference between the two groups on the questionnaires in their accuracy with identifying their accommodations. One of the open-ended questions for the intervention group inquired as to what students had learned about accommodations. Eight students reported that accommodations helped and they needed them, four students identified specific accommodations they needed, three students reported they had more accommodations than they realized, and one student reported not having learned new accommodations. This suggested that students understood they needed help, needed supports, and usually received them. However, it demonstrated that students might not have understood why they received accommodations.

To measure growth in communication skills, Meglemre (2010) asked students to rate their level of comfort with talking to teachers about their needed accommodations. The number of students in the intervention group who rated themselves as “very comfortable” requesting accommodations increased or stayed the same in all areas except for accommodations provided for repeated directions and shortened assignments. The number of students who rated themselves as “not comfortable” requesting accommodations decreased or stayed the same in all areas. Results were similar for students in the control group. The number of students who rated themselves as “very comfortable” requesting the accommodation for testing in a small group decreased from the pre-intervention questionnaire to the post-intervention questionnaire. Four accommodations, for which the number of students who rated themselves as “not comfortable” requesting, increased and included: (a) asking to have tests read aloud, (b) asking to have directions simplified, (c) asking for the book on CD, and (d) asking to

have shortened assignments. When asked about their level of comfort with talking to a friend or teacher about their disability, students responded less positively. For example, of the eighteen students from the intervention group who provided a response on the post-intervention questionnaire, only five reported having a positive experience discussing their disability or need for accommodations with a friend or teacher. Three students reported some level of comfort and eight responded either they did not have problems or they did not want to talk to others about them. Another student described having discussed it with a teacher and experiencing a negative result, and the last student did not realize a learning disability had been diagnosed so, consequently, had not ever talked to anyone about it.

In terms of student participation in transition IEP meetings in the Meglemre (2010) study, the type of student participation was categorized into four areas and included the student asking a question, the student responding to a question, the student making a comment, or the student making a request. The most frequent type of student participation was in response to a question, which was almost five times more common than making a comment. An independent samples *t*-test indicated a significant difference between the means of the two groups indicating that students in the intervention group responded to questions more often than students in the control group did. It was also noted that the meetings for students in the intervention group began with the students reading the essay they had developed in the intervention group. By preparing students for the transition meeting, the focus shifted from informational to participatory and more questions were directed to the student instead of the parent or the teacher. The results of the frequency charts on types of interactions with students in the meetings indicated that

students from both groups were asked a question an average of 19.5 times in a meeting in contrast to the student making a comment 3.7 times on average and asking a question 1.2 times. Overall, the study demonstrated that students were interested in learning about their disability and that the need for this type of education exists. Additionally, the results indicated that students could indeed be active and meaningful participants in their IEP meetings when given the opportunity to do so and when provided with specific instruction in self-advocacy skills.

Barriers to Self-Advocacy Instruction

For more than a decade, self-determination has become such a key focus in special education literature that promoting the instruction of self-determination has become a quest in the provision of comprehensive special education services (Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder, & Algozzine, 2004; Van Dycke et al., 2006). While educators place value on promoting self-advocacy skills, researchers have found there is a contrast between the value teachers place on promoting self-advocacy and the time they invest in teaching it (Cho, Wehmeyer, & Kingston, 2011; Grigal et al., 2003; Mason et al., 2004; Wehmeyer, Agran, et al., 2000). Research has indicated that teachers are unaware of and typically do not teach instructional strategies to promote self-advocacy (Test, Fowler, Brewer, et al., 2005).

In a national survey of 1,219 teachers who were providing instruction to students with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21, Wehmeyer, Agran, et al. (2000) presented questions related to self-determination, the importance of teaching self-determination, the impact of self-determination on post school life, the strategies they taught, and barriers to teaching self-determination. Results indicated that 60 % of

teachers reported they were familiar with the construct of self-determination and the vast majority of teachers ranked instruction in self-determination as important for their students. Teachers also reported that they believed that instruction in self-determination would be somewhat beneficial to their students' success in school and very helpful to prepare their students for life after school. However, nearly one-third of teachers indicated that none of their students had self-determination goals on their IEP or transition plan, 47 % indicated some did, and only 22 % indicated that all their students had IEP goals related to self-determination. In addition, nearly one-third of teachers reported they did not involve students in educational planning at all. Thus, teachers' values regarding the importance of instruction in self-determination may not be transferring to instruction to promote self-determination. Reported barriers included insufficient training, no authority or latitude to provide training, insufficient time and materials, and the need to teach other prioritized skills.

In a similar but smaller study, Grigal et al. (2003) surveyed a total of 496 parents and teachers of high school students with disabilities about their beliefs regarding self-determination. A 6-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 6 = strongly disagree) was utilized and participants were asked to circle a number on the scale for each question to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Results showed that parents and caregivers agreed that students with disabilities should be knowledgeable and skillful participants in their own IEP meetings. Parents and caregivers also agreed that students with disabilities should be taught self-determination skills in school. In terms of teacher beliefs about self-determination, survey results indicated that teachers slightly agreed they were familiar with the concept of self-

determination and with how to teach it. More than one-third of the teachers indicated unfamiliarity with the concept. The majority of teachers who were surveyed only slightly agreed that students with disabilities had the opportunity to acquire, learn, and practice self-determination at their school.

Similarly, Mason et al. (2004) surveyed 523 educators regarding their views of student self-determination and student involvement in IEPs. A majority of the respondents (77%) included special education teachers; others included general education teachers, administrators, related service providers, teacher education students, and staff at higher education institutions. The survey addressed perceptions of the importance of self-determination instruction and student involvement in IEPs, satisfaction with the IEP process, involvement of students with IEP meetings, and their involvement with self-determination instruction. Most educators reported that despite their belief that self-determination activities, including student involvement in IEPs, were very important, they were displeased with instructional activities and their preparedness in providing instruction in self-determination skills. Fifty percent of educators reported they did not feel amply prepared to provide self-determination instruction and could use more training. Furthermore, participants described IEP meeting student involvement as marginal. Most indicated students had only been somewhat involved with their IEP process during the previous year. When asked to describe the nature of student involvement in the IEP process in the current year, respondents' most common response was that students simply attended the IEP meeting but played a passive role and were not actively engaged in the process. Students who were more involved in their IEP process,

however, reportedly knew more about their disability and necessary accommodations and were more confident in requesting accommodations.

Barriers to self-determination instruction have been identified by other authors as well. For example, Cho et al. (2011) surveyed 407 general education and special education elementary teachers in 30 states to measure their perceived value of self-determination, to what degree they promote or teach it, and the obstacles that hinder them from teaching it. The study concluded that both general and special educators agree on the importance of teaching self-determination skills and at least occasionally devote instructional time to teaching the components of self-determination. Analysis of the relationship between teachers' ratings of importance and their reported frequency of instruction revealed generally weak relationships. This suggested that although teachers placed value on the promotion of self-determination skills, it was not the only factor that influenced instructional time. Educators identified several barriers that hinder them from delivering instruction in self-determination. The most cited reason was that students have needs for instruction in other areas that are more critical. Lack of training and inadequate time for instruction were the next most identified barriers. The literature reviewed in this section has demonstrated that a belief in the importance of promoting self-determination skills among students with disabilities does not negate potential barriers to the implementation of such instruction. The following section will discuss recommendations for implementation as defined in the literature.

Recommendations for Implementation of Self-Advocacy Instruction

Self-determination has been identified as an educational outcome for individuals with disabilities to experience more power and decision-making in their lives

(Wehmeyer, 1997). However, simply having access to opportunities for more autonomy does not guarantee that an individual will become more self-determined. Access is the first step in the process, but one must possess the abilities to engage successfully in these activities. Therefore, education is a key factor in assisting students with disabilities in acquiring self-determination skills. Students who are near transition-age can learn about their rights under the IDEA and about the decision-making process. Helping students understand the adult services system, basic civil and legal rights of citizenship, and specific legal protections available to them as individuals with disabilities will assist them in understanding why they need to advocate for themselves when they enter the adult world (Wehmeyer, 1997).

When researchers reviewed 25 self-advocacy intervention studies, including both researcher-developed and published curricula, they found evidence suggesting that individuals of different age groups and with varying disabilities can learn self-advocacy skills (Test, Fowler, Brewer, et al., 2005). Promoting self-determination should involve not only teaching the skills but also providing opportunities for students to practice the skills (Staab, 2010; Test & Neale, 2004; Thoma & Getzel, 2005). More specifically, students need to learn IEP meeting behaviors and understand their own interests, strengths, and weaknesses in order to exercise self-determination by actively participating in their IEP meetings (Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, et al., 2006; Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al., 2006; Meglemre, 2010; Test & Neale, 2004; Wehmeyer, 1997; Wehmeyer et al., 2007) and leading their own IEP meetings (Arndt et al., 2006; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Hammer, 2004; Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, et al., 2006; Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al., 2006; Test & Neale, 2004). Moreover, the literature has provided evidence

that efficacious instruction is feasible by utilizing either published or unpublished curricula. Students can also acquire skills in a brief amount of time. Hence, providing instruction in self-advocacy and self-determination skills does not have to be a huge undertaking requiring a vast amount of funds and resources.

Summary

In summary, research has provided evidence that students with disabilities need instruction in self-determination skills and have the ability to learn skills so they can be meaningful participants in their education. Moreover, the IEP meeting can be an authentic setting in which students who have acquired self-determination skills can exercise their skills. This chapter provided a review of literature pertinent to this study. Specifically, the literature addressed: (a) historical overview of self-advocacy movement, (b) legislation and policies supporting self-determination, (c) components of self-advocacy, (d) importance of promoting self-determination and self-advocacy instruction, (e) the IEP meeting as an authentic setting to exercise self-determination, (f) barriers to self-advocacy instruction, and (f) recommendations for implementation of self-advocacy instruction.

Chapter three describes the methodology involved in the study including the research design, population and sample, and sampling procedures. Further, the instrumentation and measurement are described, which includes the reliability and validity of each instrument. In addition, data collection procedures and data analysis are discussed. The chapter concludes with a review of limitations of the study. Chapter four provides detailed results of the study. Finally, chapter five includes an overview of the

study and an interpretive summary of the findings. It concludes with implications for action and a discussion of recommendations for future research.

Chapter Three

Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine two groups of students with regard to knowledge of their disabilities and learning needs, level of self-determination, and degree of IEP meeting participation, as outlined in chapter one. Separate instruments were utilized to measure these variables. The methodology used is presented in this chapter, which is organized into seven sections: (a) research design, (b) population and sample, (c) sampling procedures, (d) instrumentation, measurement, reliability, and validity, (e) instruction and data collection procedures, (e) data analysis, and (f) limitations of the study.

Research Design

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) described mixed methods research as a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a better understanding of research problems than either approach can accomplish alone. Furthermore, mixed methods research can provide a more convincing argument than either words or numbers in presenting a complete picture of the findings. A concurrent embedded mixed methods research design was described by Creswell (2009) as a strategy in which both quantitative and qualitative data collection are embedded within one data collection phase. This model was appealing because a researcher is able to collect both types of data simultaneously and "...the researcher can gain perspectives from different types of data or from different levels within the study" (p. 215). The present study was a multiple case study and was conducted using a concurrent embedded mixed methods research design. Quantitative instruments were used to measure students' knowledge of self, knowledge of

rights, level of self-determination, and degree of IEP meeting participation. At the same time, open-ended journal entries, surveys, and observations assessed students' knowledge of their disabilities and learning needs and served as both quantitative and qualitative measures. In addition, observation rubrics measured students' degree of involvement in the IEP meeting while open-ended surveys measured students' perception of their IEP meeting involvement.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was all middle school-aged students with disabilities in three suburban, public middle schools in the state of Kansas. The sample included a total of eleven eighth grade students with disabilities who were receiving special education services in the same school district. Six students made up the intervention group and five students made up the control group. In order for the control group to be comparable in number with the intervention group, it was necessary to recruit students from two different middle school buildings within the school district.

Sampling Procedures

Careful screening and thoughtful selection of group members can result in a group that is ready to work and contribute (Corey, 2000). Therefore, sampling in this study was purposive in nature and included nine eighth grade students who had been identified as having a learning disability or Other Health Impairment. Students who had received prior self-advocacy instruction were excluded. Additionally, when assigning students to the intervention and control group, the researcher considered personal knowledge of student temperaments to minimize conflict among group members and to maximize group processes. Furthermore, after the researcher obtained informed written parental

consent for their child's participation in the study, students were interviewed to establish their willingness to participate, since screening should be a mutual process in which potential members have the option to determine the suitability of their participation in the group (Corey, 2000). Students who were unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

The selected participants consisted of eighth grade students with disabilities who were receiving special education services. In order to achieve a number of participants comparable to the intervention group, control group students were selected from two different middle schools within the same school district. Control group students were chosen from other buildings within the district in order to avoid the potential influence of the intervention.

Instrumentation, Measurement, Reliability, and Validity

Seven different instruments were utilized in this study to measure students' perceptions and knowledge of, as well as students' growth in self-advocacy or self-determination skills. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] (see Appendix A) was chosen based on its psychometric properties and inclusion in past research studies on self-determination and students with disabilities. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] also provided a quantitative measure of students' self-determination skills and growth in skills from pre to post-intervention. The scale was easy to administer to the student sample and in the study setting. The IEP Survey Scoring Rubric (see Appendix B) was developed by the researcher to provide a quantitative measure of students' responses on the IEP Survey[®] (see Appendix C) described below. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric (see Appendix D) was chosen based on its inclusion in past research studies on student IEP

meeting participation. It provided a quantitative measure of students' IEP meeting participation and allowed observers to rate students' IEP meeting behaviors while, at the same time, it allowed observers to participate in the IEP meetings without distraction.

The IEP Survey[®], journal writing prompts (see Appendix E), IEP Meeting Script (see Appendix F), and IEP Meeting Reflection Survey (see Appendix G) were chosen from the "Disabilities" materials, a self-advocacy curriculum selected for the intervention lessons (Held, 2007). The IEP Survey[®] and journal writing prompts provided a qualitative measure of students' knowledge of topics presented in the lessons. The IEP Meeting Script was utilized in order to provide students in the intervention group with a visual aid for participating in their IEP meetings. The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey provided a qualitative measure of students' feedback regarding their participation in their IEP meetings.

Following is a description of each instrument in the chronological order in which it was used in the study, along with a description of the variables each instrument measured. A discussion of the reliability and validity of each instrument is also included. For all instruments administered, students were provided with accommodations as outlined on their IEPs, such as the provision of a scribe for written responses, items read aloud to the student, and extra time for completion. Following is a description of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], the IEP Survey[®], the IEP Survey Scoring Rubric, the journal writing prompts, the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric, the IEP Meeting Script, and the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] (Adolescent Version) is a self-report measure of self-determination designed for use with

adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995). Wehmeyer (1995) clarified that its emphasis is not as a diagnostic or prescriptive instrument, but as a tool for students and educators when identifying student strengths and limitations in the area of self-determination. In addition, it provides a means for researchers to explore factors that promote or inhibit the acquisition self-determination skills. The scale was constructed and normed with these uses in mind and other uses of the scale are inappropriate (Wehmeyer, 1995, p. 10). The instrument consists of 72 items in four sections. Each section explores an essential characteristic of self-determination: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization (Wehmeyer, 1995, p. 79).

The Autonomy domain consists of 32 questions related to independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities. Students are presented with a statement and provided with four response choices: “I do not even if I have the chance,” “I do sometimes when I have the chance,” “I do most of the time I have the chance,” or “I do every time I have the chance.” Students respond to only one of the four choices on each question. The student is awarded a score of 0 points, 1 point, 2 points, or 3 points, respectively, based on the response types described above; a total of 96 points is possible. Low scores represent low levels of autonomy and higher scores indicate higher degrees of autonomy (Wehmeyer, 1995, p. 79).

The Self-Regulation section contains two subdomains in which students are required to write or dictate their answers. The first subsection involves story-based scenarios in which the student is presented with the beginning and ending of a situation. The student identifies what he or she believes to be the best solution to the scenario by

providing the middle of the story. Student responses are scored based on the effectiveness of their solution to the problem. Zero points are awarded if the student gave no answer or the solution provided would fail to achieve the ending given in the scenario. One point is awarded if the student provides an acceptable answer but the answer might have limited effectiveness to achieve the given ending. Two points are awarded for answers that provide acceptable, ample means to achieve the given ending. To provide guidance in assigning appropriate points for responses, suggestions are given as to what elements to look for when scoring items and example answers are provided from the normative sample for each scenario. This subsection has a total of 12 points possible, with higher scores denoting more effective interpersonal problem-solving. The second subsection of the Self-Regulation domain consists of three questions related to goal setting and task performance. Students are asked questions such as, “Where do you want to live after you graduate?” and students are asked to list four things they should do to meet the goal. Up to 3 points are accumulated for each item based on the existence of a goal and the number of steps the student provides to meet the goal. A total of 9 points are possible in this subsection, with higher scores depicting more effective goal-setting and task attainment skills. Scoring guides and examples from the norming sample are also provided (Wehmeyer, 1995).

The Psychological Empowerment domain is comprised of 16 questions requesting students to choose which best portrays them. One point is awarded for answers that reflect beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success. Answers are awarded 0 points when not reflecting a psychologically empowered attitude or belief. A

total of 16 points are possible, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of psychological empowerment (Wehmeyer, 1995, p. 93).

The final domain, Self-Realization, consists of 15 questions and assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge. As in the Psychological Empowerment domain, answers are awarded either 0 or 1 point based on the course of the answer. For example, answers are assigned 1 point when reflecting a positive self-awareness and self-knowledge, and 0 points are assigned for answers that do not. A total of 15 points are possible in this subsection, with higher scores reflecting greater self-realization (Wehmeyer, 1995).

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale procedural guidelines manual documents the validity and reliability of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] including concurrent criterion-related validity, discriminative validity, construct validity, and internal consistency reliability. Concurrent criterion-related validity is defined by Lunenburg and Irby (2008) as "...the degree to which scores on one test correlate to scores on another test when both tests are administered at about the same time" (p. 181). Each domain score and the total score were correlated with a global locus of control scale, a measure of academic achievement attributions, and a self-efficacy scale. Most of the relationships were moderate to strong (.25 to .50), providing evidence for moderately strong criterion-related validity.

Creswell (2009) described construct validity as whether items measure hypothetical constructs or concepts and includes "...whether the scores serve a useful purpose and have positive consequences when they are used in practice" (p. 149). Factor analyses supported the construct validity of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] as a

valid measure of self-determination as a multifaceted construct. According to the procedural guidelines manual (Wehmeyer, 1995), “These analyses show that factors resulting from the Scale reflect the constructs they are intended to measure” (Wehmeyer, 1995, p. 130). An instrument has discriminative validity if it adequately differentiates between groups that should differ based on theoretical reasons or previous research (Wehmeyer, 1995). The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[®] differed in most skill areas by chronological age, with older students scoring better. Gender did not significantly influence total score differences, and the scale adequately differentiated between students with cognitive disabilities and students without disabilities, providing evidence of discriminative validity. The scale also incorporated items from two existing instruments: the Autonomous Functioning Checklist and the Personality Orientation Inventory, which both have documented validity, thus providing enhanced construct validity (Wehmeyer, 1995).

Internal consistency reliability was indexed for The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[®] using Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded a coefficient alpha of .90 for the whole scale. Cronbach’s alpha ranges from 0 to 1.0; however, levels as low as 0.7 are considered acceptable, and the closer to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Also, with the exception of Self-Regulation, separate analyses were conducted for each subscale domain, which yielded alpha levels of .90 for the Autonomy domain, .73 for the Psychological Empowerment domain, and .62 for the Self-Realization domain. According to Wehmeyer (1995), the lower alpha levels for the last two domains are not uncommon since they measure perceptions and beliefs. The Self-Regulation subscale domain did not lend itself to such analysis due to

the open-ended format (Wehmeyer, 1995, p. 131). To ensure reliable scores on this instrument and due to the subjective nature of scoring criteria for parts of this instrument, the researcher enlisted the assistance of two colleagues who scored each student's instrument. Then, scores were compared among all three individuals until consensus was reached on the final raw score points.

IEP Survey. The IEP Survey[®] (Held, 2007) was adapted with permission from Nicole Held, a special education teacher and author of *Difabilities* materials (see Appendix H). The adapted survey consists of 12, open-ended questions that measure students' knowledge with regard to: (a) their disabilities, (b) IEPs, (c) personal learning needs, (d) special education laws, (e) self-advocacy, and (f) IEP meeting participation. The questions began with general definition questions followed by more personally relevant questions. For example, the first question asks what a disability is and the second question asks what the student's disability is. All participants completed the IEP Survey[®], which was used for both pre- and post-measures. Reliability and validity have not been established for the IEP Survey[®], but it was included as part of the *Difabilities* curriculum used with the students who received explicit self-advocacy instruction.

Using the IEP Survey Scoring Rubric, the pre-survey and post-survey were scored by the researcher and two individuals who were unfamiliar with the students, a school psychologist, and an adaptive specialist who were employed by the school district. The rubric was developed by the researcher to provide a consistent measure of student responses on the IEP Survey[®] and multiple raters were utilized to ensure reliable ratings. Statistical reliability and validity were not established for the rubric; however, the researcher conferred with several special educators to obtain feedback on the content of

the rubric before using the instrument. Two individuals suggested adding a description to clarify a rating of one point on the rubric. For example, the original qualification for obtaining one point on the rubric consisted of a student providing a response not related to specific questions. The suggestion was to award one point if the student otherwise gave an incorrect answer. The rubric was revised to reflect this clarification of a one point response. Scores from all three raters were added for each item to obtain a total score. This scoring method was utilized to provide a measure that was more sensitive to individual growth than a mean score (Spector, 1992).

Journal writing prompts. Four open-ended journal writing prompts were adapted from *Difabilities* materials (Held, 2007), with the author's permission, and used to assess students' knowledge of their disabilities and learning needs. After students in the intervention group participated in a lesson, a journal prompt addressing the topic of the lesson was administered to students in both the intervention group and the control group. The first journal prompt explored the students' personal disability and their perceptions of how it would affect them in the future. The second journal prompt queried students on their personal IEP goals and accommodations. The third journal prompt asked students to think about three ways they could be better self-advocates during the school year. Finally, the last journal prompt presented a difficult scenario they might find themselves encountering in the school setting; students were asked to share the manner in which they would handle it. More details regarding the timing, format and content of the journal prompts are included in the instruction section. After the prompt was read aloud to the students, each student was given the prompt on a full page of paper and instructed to answer the prompt with their own ideas. There were no time limits expressed or any

parameters given with regard to the length of their responses. The prompt was read aloud a second time and clarified when needed per student request.

IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to measure the degree of students' IEP meeting participation. The rubric was adapted from *The Self-Directed IEP* (Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1997), an evidenced-based, self-determination curriculum designed to teach students with disabilities skills they need to be successful in adulthood. The adapted instrument consisted of 10 observable behaviors for which a maximum of two points was awarded for each behavior. Specifically, students were observed and rated as to whether they introduced themselves and IEP team members; stated the purpose of the meeting; reviewed their IEP goals and progress; asked for feedback; stated necessary support; expressed interests, skills, limits, and goals for the future; and closed the meeting by thanking team members. A total of 20 points was possible. No point was assigned when a student did not demonstrate the behavior; one point was assigned when a student demonstrated the behavior with a prompt or cue from an adult or partially demonstrated the behavior; and two points were assigned when a student demonstrated the behavior without adult prompts or cues. To establish inter-observer reliability with the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric, three raters observed the student at each IEP meeting. Observers were recruited from the students' IEP team and consisted of special education case managers and school psychologists, including the researcher. To provide training to the observers, the researcher met with the individuals prior to each IEP meeting to review the rubric and clarify each point on the rubric. Scores from all three observers were then added for each item to obtain a total score, with a total of 60 points possible.

IEP Meeting Script. The IEP Meeting Script[®] was adapted from the *Difabilities* materials (Held, 2007), with permission from the author, and was designed to help prepare students for participating in their IEP meeting. The original version consisted of 10 questions or statements for the student to initiate including: (a) stating the purpose of the meeting; (b) introducing self and other team members; (c) reviewing present levels of performance; (d) requesting input from others; (e) discussing new goals for the year; (f) identifying post-secondary goals; (g) stating elective class choices; (h) discussing special education classes the student will take the following school year; (i) review necessary accommodations and modifications; and (j) close the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. This script also proved useful by providing a visual agenda for students to familiarize them with the format of their meeting. For these reasons, this instrument was chosen to be utilized in the present study. The instrument does not have established validity or reliability; however, it had been deemed a useful tool for students participating in the *Difabilities* curriculum (Held, 2007). The adapted version employed in the present study consisted of only 8 items and contained similar questions and statements, with the exception of the ones pertaining to elective class choices and enrollment in special education classes for the upcoming school year. In the present study, students were introduced to the instrument to familiarize them with the format of the IEP meeting, but the students were not required to use it for their meeting.

IEP Meeting Reflection Survey. The IEP Meeting Reflection[®] survey was also adapted from the *Difabilities* materials (Held, 2007), with permission from the author, and was designed for use after the IEP meeting had transpired. The original version consisted of 4 open-ended questions for which students were required to write a

paragraph for the first two questions. The third question asked students what they would do to make sure they had a say in their IEP the following year. The final question provided an opportunity for students to pose additional questions. For the present study, the survey was modified and consisted of six open-ended, shorter questions for which students were not required to answer in paragraph format. Originally, the intent was to use the questions as a semi-structured interview. However, time did not allow for this opportunity during the study so the questions were used as a survey. The survey provided qualitative data regarding students' feelings and perceptions about participating in the IEP meeting. Responses were coded to establish categories of themes that emerged. Themes were then compared to existing literature on self-determination or self-advocacy and IEP meeting participation and knowledge of disabilities. Because of its qualitative nature, the instrument did not have established statistical reliability and validity. However, it was deemed useful for the present study because it was a piece of the *Difabilities* materials utilized with the students in the intervention group and provided valuable information regarding students' feelings, perceptions, and comfort level at the IEP meeting.

Instruction and Data Collection

Data were collected during an intervention conducted by the researcher as part of her role as a school psychologist. Later, permission was granted by the school district to use the archival data for the current research study (see Appendix I). After permission was obtained from the Baker University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix J), data analysis began. This study was conducted using a concurrent, embedded mixed methods research design in which both quantitative and qualitative data collection were

embedded within one data collection phase. A multiple case study method was also employed in which a data story was created for each student to describe individual quantitative and qualitative data to answer research questions. This model allowed the researcher to gain broader perspectives from different types of data rather than through utilizing a sole approach. To provide a timeline of the steps involved in the study, this section is divided into subsections for clarity.

Consent. Parents of selected students were contacted by phone to inform them of the study. For the intervention group, the researcher obtained informed written consent (see Appendix K) from parents for their child's participation in self-advocacy instruction, to complete instruments and surveys, to participate in journal activities, to be observed at an IEP meeting, and to be interviewed after the IEP Meeting. For the control group, the researcher obtained informed written consent from parents for their child only to complete instruments and surveys, to participate in journal activities, to be observed at an IEP meeting, and to be interviewed after the IEP meeting (see Appendix L). For Spanish speaking parents, communication was provided through an interpreter employed by the school district; a consent form was also provided in Spanish (see Appendix M).

Pre-test. After consent forms were received, intervention and control group students were asked individually about their willingness to participate. Students who were not willing to participate in the activities were not chosen. Once student consent was established, pre-testing measures commenced. During the first session, students in the intervention group completed a student confidentiality agreement (see Appendix N) to ensure they would keep discussions confidential, would participate in the assigned activities, and would treat other group members with respect. Also during the first

session, the students in both the intervention group and the control group completed the IEP Survey[®] to measure existing levels of skills related to their knowledge of their disability and rights, the components of an IEP, the definition and purpose of accommodations and modifications, and the definition and purpose of self-advocacy. Students in both groups also completed The Arc's Self-Determination Scale: Adolescent Version[®] (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995), a questionnaire designed to assist students with learning difficulties in identifying their strengths and limitations in the area of self-determination.

Instruction. Sessions occurred one time per week for six weeks during a 30-minute non-instructional block. Session one began with pre-testing measures for both groups. During session two, only students in the intervention group began receiving explicit instruction in self-advocacy based on topics and materials adapted from an existing self-advocacy *Difabilities* curriculum developed by a special education teacher in a North Central Wisconsin school district (Held, 2007). The curriculum was designed to provide instruction to 8th grade students throughout the course of the school year and lessons were organized into nine parts. First, Part One began with an introduction to an IEP and types of disabilities. Activities included surveying students' knowledge of the IEP and establishing an understanding of confidentiality. Supplemental worksheets and projects were provided, which were designed for students to increase their knowledge of their disabilities. Part Two of the curriculum provided detailed instruction regarding elements of an IEP, which contained annual goals, benchmarks, modifications, and accommodations. Activities included journaling and discussions. Next, Part Three allowed for students to review their own IEPs and to complete an IEP scavenger hunt

worksheet. Additional activities consisted of an IEP game similar to Jeopardy, reviewing IEPs individually with each student, and setting weekly benchmarks to work on IEP goals. Part Four introduced self-advocacy using worksheets and Power Point slides. A journal prompt also provided students with an opportunity to reflect on ways in which they can become a better self-advocate. Role playing and discussion of obstacles to self-advocacy provided additional occasion for reflection, and an optional IEP Expert game was provided as an extension activity. Moving on to application of knowledge, Part Five taught students how to participate in their IEP meetings by using an IEP Script. Then, Part Six began a discussion of transition to high school and adult life and afforded students time to complete required materials for the school district. Students also gained knowledge about different learning styles and were given a learning styles quiz. Briefly, Part Seven provided an overview of other areas of special education including basic laws and legislation, such as IDEA and ADA. Culminating projects were provided in Part Eight, which afforded students time to create a handout or Power Point presentation about themselves, which was later used at the students' IEP meeting. Individual time with each student was allowed so that students were able to review their IEP and make any necessary changes. Finally, Part Nine was designed for measuring students' level of knowledge gained through the curriculum. Assessments included a test over the IEP, an end-of-unit survey, and interview.

For the present study, the lessons were modified in length and complexity as next described to fit within a six-week timeframe. The researcher co-facilitated the intervention with the special education teacher at the middle school. Instruction was provided via Power Point slides, which presented topics and facilitated discussion (see

Appendix O). The brief journal prompts, which corresponded to topics discussed in each lesson, were administered to both the intervention group and control group weekly. The journal prompts, which were administered after each lesson, included one or two open-ended questions designed to assess knowledge and perceptions of IEPs, IEP meetings, disabilities, or self-determination skills. Students in the control group did not experience any disruption to their routine during the non-instructional block, other than when they were completing a journal prompt, survey, or questionnaire once per week. Following are detailed descriptions of each lesson and corresponding journal prompt.

Students in the intervention group participated in four weekly lessons aimed at educating them about their disabilities, the IEP, self-advocacy, and participating in their IEP meetings. During the first session, students participated in a lesson in which they were instructed that an IEP is for students who have disabilities. In addition, they were educated about the nature of a learning disability and an Other Health Impairment and were shown pictures of celebrities who have those disabilities. At the end of the lesson, students were given the following journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future?

During the second session, students in the intervention group participated in a lesson in which they were instructed on what the acronym, IEP, stands for and that an IEP is a plan to help them reach their goals. Students were told that an IEP contains at least one goal and includes accommodations or modifications they need in order to be successful at school. A transition plan, which is written for each student who is turning 14 years of age, was also explained to students. To provide students with personal application of the information, they were given copies of their own IEP goals and

accommodations pages, as well as their transition plans if applicable. Students were also briefly informed about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities.

Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are?

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. Students gained information about visual learners, auditory learners, and hands-on learners and were asked to identify their personal learning style. They also identified who needed to be informed about their learning style and how they could advocate for themselves when needed. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year?

The fourth session focused on preparing students for their IEP meeting. The lesson consisted of instruction on what to expect at the meeting, what not to do, and how they could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they encountered difficulty with reading and completing long tests or assignments and were asked how they would handle it.

After students completed their responses to the journal prompt, they were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. In addition, they were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use

it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Students were encouraged to meet with their special education case manager to edit slides to reflect their individual needs in preparation for their IEP meeting.

Post-test. After students in the intervention group had participated in the final lesson, both groups completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to measure growth. In the spring of 2012, transition IEP meetings were held for all 8th grade students in the school district who have IEPs. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the student and parents to the receiving high school team, to provide an overview of the IEP, and to discuss any necessary revisions to the student's plan upon entering high school. The intervention and control group of students were observed at these meetings by three members of each student's respective IEP team to determine students' degree of IEP meeting involvement and the ability to demonstrate self-advocacy behaviors. To provide a quantitative measure of these behaviors, the three IEP team members utilized the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. Following the transition IEP meetings, students in both groups also completed the IEP Meeting Reflection survey to assess their feelings and perceptions about their recent IEP meeting participation.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), mixed methods data analysis begins when the investigator prepares the data for analysis, explores the data, analyzes the data to answer the research questions, represents the data, and validates the data. Additionally, mixed methods studies require specific techniques related to data transformation and the comparison of quantitative and qualitative data in a discussion or

matrix (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Following, is a discussion of the data analysis phases of the present study, which utilized a quantitative and qualitative methodology and data analysis.

Data preparation and transformation. First, data were prepared for analysis by gathering the quantitative data from raw scores obtained from the IEP Survey[®]; the raw scores from The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] in each of the four domains and for the total self-determination score were converted to percentile scores. Pre-intervention scores, post-intervention scores, and growth scores were also calculated. Student responses on the IEP Survey[®], journal prompts, and the IEP Meeting Reflection[®] survey provided qualitative data. The following information provides a description of the stages of data preparation for the qualitative data.

When analyzing qualitative data, the researcher must first code the data in preparation for analysis, which often involves more than one cycle of coding. For the present study, descriptive coding was utilized in the first cycle. Saldaña (2009) described descriptive coding as assigning a word or short phrase to summarize the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data (p. 70). Initially, descriptive codes were assigned to students' responses on the IEP Survey[®], journal prompts, and the IEP Meeting Reflection[®] survey. More detailed subcodes were also assigned when specificity was needed.

Data exploration. Next, in the second cycle, pattern coding was employed with qualitative data in which inferential or explanatory codes were assigned to initial codes to determine categories and sub-categories that emerged (Saldaña, 2009). Once categories were formed, they were examined to determine emergent themes related to self-advocacy components and then reexamined to refine themes until precision was established and

data no longer produced new information. Quantitative data were explored and organized by placing them into spreadsheets, tables, and charts.

Data representation and validation. A data story was written for each student to organize both quantitative and qualitative data in a cohesive format while maintaining the chronological occurrence of events. Following the student data stories, a summary of the findings was constructed using matrices to describe comparison of data across groups. Themes constructed from qualitative data and scores calculated from quantitative data made up the matrix in which data from the intervention group and the control group were examined to find similarities and differences. Themes and scores were also compared to the research questions and literature related to self-determination or self-advocacy and IEP meeting participation, knowledge of disabilities, and knowledge of rights.

Cresswell and Plano Clark (2007) stressed a need to assess validity in a mixed methods study in terms of the research design and potential threats to validity not only in data collection but also in data analysis. The following section discusses limitations, which are identified threats to the validity of the present study.

Limitations

Limitations of a study are factors that are not under the control of the researcher and that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the results (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 133). This study included the following limitations:

1. Since changes occur continuously in the school environment that could affect student performance, data cannot be assumed stable over time.

2. While changes occur in students and among groups of students, other extraneous variables outside the control of the researcher, such as student motivation and experiences outside the school setting, could affect student outcomes.
3. Due to the selected small sample size, results cannot be generalized to all students. In addition, two students in the intervention group moved before they completed all of the lessons, and two additional students (one in the intervention group and one in the control group) did not attend their transition IEP meetings. Therefore, consistent comparisons between groups could not be made.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine students' degree of IEP meeting participation, knowledge of their disabilities and learning needs, and level of self-determination and to determine whether self-advocacy instruction increases students' self-advocacy skills. Specifically, the research questions addressed whether differences exist between students who received self-advocacy instruction and those who did not, and whether the self-advocacy instruction was effective in increasing students' IEP meeting participation. The participants were chosen through a purposive sample of eighth graders with IEPs enrolled in a suburban public school district in Kansas. The selection of the sample from the target population was discussed. In addition, the description, validity, and reliability of the instruments used were reviewed. The data collection procedures and data analysis to address each of the research questions were also described in this chapter. In the following chapter, results of the data analysis are presented in detail.

Chapter Four

Results

The intention of this study was to investigate the effects of explicit self-advocacy instruction on 8th grade students' knowledge of their disabilities and learning needs. In addition, it explored how the self-advocacy instruction impacted the students' level of self-determination and the degree and nature of their IEP meeting participation. The purpose of this study was attained by examining both quantitative and qualitative data for each student. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis for each of the four research questions.

First, within-case results are presented in which findings are arranged by a data story, a structured discussion of data in relation to each of the participants in the study. Next, cross-case results are presented in which data stories are compared for similarities and differences. Then, this chapter presents the results and organizes the information in order of the four research questions. The chapter concludes with an overall summary of the results of the study.

Within-Case Results

This section begins with a presentation of data related to students in the intervention group, followed by a presentation of data related to students in the control group. A data story for each of the students opens with background information including demographics, the nature of the student's disability, and the length of time the student has been receiving special education services. Then, each student's scores on the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] are described. For students in the intervention group, the next section of the data story provides a brief description of each

lesson and a description of each of the student's responses to journal prompts given at the end of each lesson. For students in the control group who did not participate in the lessons, this portion of the data story provides only a description of the student's responses to the journal prompts. The next portion of the data story describes each student's post-test score on the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], including a discussion of growth from the previous scores. Then, each student's participation in the IEP meeting is discussed, which is organized by the behaviors outlined on the IEP Meeting Observation rubric. Finally, the data story for each student concludes with descriptions of responses to questions on the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey. All names used in the present study are pseudonyms.

First intervention case study: Jack. At the time of the study, Jack, a Hispanic male, was a 14-year-old with a learning disability who had been receiving special education services since third grade. According to his IEP for the 2011-12 school year, Jack demonstrated learning difficulties in the areas of math, reading comprehension, and written expression. In the area of math, Jack was demonstrating gaps in his skills from the sixth to the eighth grade level, which impacted his ability to complete grade level math assignments. His reading comprehension skills were comparable to those of a typical seventh grade student, and he struggled with comprehending eighth grade level text. In the area of written expression, curriculum-based assessments indicated Jack had trouble with spelling, capitalization, and verb tense. His written expression skills were comparable to those of a typical seventh grade student and he often wrote very few words when expressing his thoughts in writing. Testing accommodations necessary for his success included an alternate setting for taking tests, tests modified in length and

complexity, directions and questions read aloud to him, and extended time to complete tests. In addition, he was allowed guided notes when note-taking required more than twenty words; study guides for tests; and extra time to complete assignments.

Pre-tests. During the first intervention session, Jack willingly completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©]. Based on observers' ratings from the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Jack obtained a score of 17, 12, and 13, respectively, from the raters on the IEP Survey[©]. His combined score was 42. His mean score was 14. When Jack responded to the IEP[©] items, he knew that a disability was, "something that someone has or something they need help with" but he was unable to identify his own disability. In addition, he did not know what an IEP was and did not know how it could help him in his education. He also was unable to describe an accommodation or modification and did not know there were laws to help in him in special education. He described a self-advocate as, "learning what you need to know" and indicated that being a self-advocate was important, "because you need to understand what you need to learn" (question 9). Finally, Jack accurately indicated he had never attended his IEP meetings.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the intervention group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 19th percentile to the 96th percentile. Jack obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 53rd percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Jack's score was at the 55th percentile. In the Self-Regulation

domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Jack's score was at the 80th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Jack's score was at the 59th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Jack's score was at the 24th percentile. In summary, his individual scores on each of the domains suggested that his skills in self-regulation may have been more developed than his self-realization skills. Overall, his self-determination skills were average when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. During the first of four lessons, students were educated about the nature of a learning disability and Other Health Impairment and were instructed that an IEP is for a student with a disability. At the end of the lesson, students responded to the journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Jack did not identify his disability but acknowledged it by indicating, "I don't like it." He also recognized it would affect him in the future when he has a job.

During the second lesson, students were instructed about the IEP as a plan to help them reach their goals, about accommodations, modifications, transition plans, and briefly about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities. Following the lesson, students responded to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Jack accurately responded, "Math because I struggle a little," which identified one of his IEP goals.

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Jack was absent for this portion of the lesson and did not have an opportunity to respond to the journal prompt at a later time.

The final lesson included instruction on what to expect at the meeting, what not to do, and how students could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments that were too long and hard. Jack's response indicated that he would "ask a teacher to read it."

After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. They were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Jack designed his Power Point slides to reflect his personal learning style, his necessary accommodations, his IEP goals and progress, and his goals for the future.

IEP meeting participation. At his transition IEP meeting at the high school, Jack's participation was observed and rated by three members of his IEP team including the researcher, his prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist

at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate his degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the intervention group obtained scores that ranged from 28 to 50 points. Behaviors included introducing himself and IEP team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing his IEP goals and progress; asking for feedback from team members; stating needed support; expressing his interests, skills, and limits; expressing his goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone. According to ratings from the three observers, Jack introduced himself at the meeting. However, there was disagreement as to whether he did so with a prompt or cue from an adult. Two of the observers assigned him 2 points for doing so without a prompt or cue from an adult, but one observer indicated he required a prompt and assigned one point. Jack also introduced IEP team members, which was noted by two of the observers as having occurred without a prompt or cue. However, one observer did not observe this and rated him as not having made introductions to the team. With regard to stating the purpose of the meeting, two of the observers noted that he failed to do so but one observer indicated he did so without a prompt or cue. All three observers agreed that he independently reviewed his IEP goals and his progress, asked for feedback, stated his necessary supports, expressed his interests, and expressed his goals for the future. All three observers also noted that he did not express his skills and limitations. There also was agreement among the three observers that Jack closed the meeting by thanking everyone when given a prompt. His scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 44 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. During the final session, the intervention group completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] again to determine growth. On the

IEP Survey[©], Jack earned scores of 15, 19, and 22, respectively, from the three raters. His combined score was 56. His mean score was 18.7. He described a disability as “a need” (question 1) and was able to identify accurately his disability as “LD” (question 2). He described an IEP as “a meeting to talk about the child’s disability” (question 3) but could not recall what the acronym, IEP, meant. When asked how an IEP helps him in his education, he responded, “by talking about it” (question 5). He still was not sure what an accommodation or modification was or if there were any laws to help him in special education. He described a self-advocate as, “What you need” (question 8), and he stated the reason being a self-advocate was important was “to ask for help” (question 9). He could not recall how many times he had been to his IEP meetings, even though he had recently attended his transition IEP meeting. When asked if he was comfortable participating in his IEP meetings, he stated “maybe, not sure” (question 10) but was able to identify that he talked at his IEP meetings. Overall, while Jack’s responses to most questions on the post IEP Survey[©] were not completely accurate or detailed, they were an improvement from his first responses on the IEP Survey[©]. This time, he was able to identify his disability and while his answers were not always accurate, he gave more details than he did on the initial IEP Survey[©]. His combined score was 14 points higher than his first combined score.

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the intervention group earned post-test scores ranging from the 45th to 99th percentile. Jack’s total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 73rd percentile, a gain of twenty percentile points from his first score. His individual scores on the Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization domains demonstrated growth from

his pre-test score as depicted in Table 1. Jack demonstrated growth in each of the domains. His most marked growth was in the Psychological Empowerment domain, as evidenced by his pre-test score in the 59th percentile and his post-test score in the 100th percentile.

Table 1

Jack's Arc's Self-Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	55	60
Self-Regulation	80	95
Psychological Empowerment	59	100
Self-Realization	24	37
Self-Determination Total Score	53	73

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what he shared at the meeting, Jack stated, “the things on my power point and I wanted to know what high school would be like” (question 1a). When asked how he felt during the meeting, he indicated he felt “good” (question 1b) and that he was glad he had participated “because it was interesting” (question 1c). When asked how he had prepared for the IEP meeting, he stated he had practiced the Power Point. The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and asked students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Jack indicated, “Maybe talk more” (question 2).

Second intervention case study: Nathan. At the time of the study, Nathan, a Caucasian male, was a 13-year-old who had been receiving special education services under the category of Other Health Impairment since the previous school year in seventh grade. According to his IEP during the 2011-12 school year, Nathan had diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Anxiety, and Asperger's Syndrome. Nathan was described as very caring and concerned about others' perceptions of him. He struggled with impulsive behaviors that manifested as inappropriate comments and actions. Nathan also had difficulty conceptualizing how his actions impacted others. Nathan's IEP goals addressed organization skills and self-management. He struggled with organization, which caused him to lose assignments or forget to complete them. He required adult prompts to fill out each line of his agenda. He also struggled with self-management with regard to remaining on topic during conversations with peers, responding appropriately to questions from teachers, appropriately seeking adult and peer attention, and applying acquired coping skills to work through OCD-related moments. Accommodations necessary for his success included providing him a copy of notes when note-taking was required in his classes. In addition, he received grading accommodations for late work. A behavior intervention plan and positive behavior supports were also implemented to address OCD-related behaviors and inappropriate behaviors.

Pre-tests. During the first intervention session, Nathan willingly completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on ratings on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Nathan obtained a score of 19, 21, and 23, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. His combined score was 63. His mean score was 21. When

Nathan responded to the IEP Survey[©] items, he knew that a disability was, “something that disables someone from performing a specific task” (question 1) and was able to describe his own disability but did not label it formally as Other Health Impairment. In addition, he described an IEP as, “a document” (question 3) and the acronym stood for, “Integrated Embarrassment Program” (question 4). He was unsure how an IEP could help him in his education. He also was unable to describe an accommodation or modification and did not know there were laws to help him in special education. He did not know what a self-advocate was and was unable to tell why being a self-advocate is important. Nathan accurately indicated he had attended his IEP meetings one time, as indicated by his response, “Tally: 1” (question 10). When asked if he was comfortable participating in his IEP meetings, he responded, “I don’t know why I wouldn’t be” (question 11). When asked to describe what he does at his IEP meetings, his response indicated he did not understand the question; he responded, “So far, this quiz” (question 12).

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[©], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the intervention group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 19th percentile to the 96th percentile. Nathan obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 19th percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Nathan’s score was at the 21st percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task

performance, Nathan's score was at the 60th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Nathan's score was at the 17th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Nathan's score was at the 73rd percentile. In summary, his individual scores on each of the domains suggested that his skills in self-regulation and self-realization may have been more developed than his autonomy and psychological empowerment skills. Overall, his self-determination skills were in the low end of the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. During the first of four lessons, students were educated about the nature of a learning disability and Other Health Impairment and were instructed that an IEP is for a student with a disability. At the end of the lesson, students responded to the journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Nathan identified his disability as ADHD, which was one of his medical diagnoses that allowed him to qualify for special education services under the category of Other Health Impairment. He also recognized it would affect him in the future by stating, "I might lose a few jobs—I'm impulsive."

During the second lesson, students were instructed about the IEP as a plan to help them reach their goals, about accommodations, modifications, transition plans, and briefly about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities. Following the lesson, students responded to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Nathan responded, "Staying organized and being appropriate," an

accurate but approximate description of his IEP goals, which addressed organization skills and self-management.

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Nathan did not demonstrate his understanding of self-advocacy but did demonstrate an insightful plan for his success at school by identifying he would need to, “Turn stuff in on time, make the honor roll, stay out of trouble.”

The final lesson included instruction on what to expect at the meeting, what not to do, and how students could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Nathan indicated that he would “guess the question.”

After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. They were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Nathan designed his Power Point slides to reflect his personal learning style, his necessary accommodations, his IEP goals and progress, and his goals for the future.

IEP meeting participation. A transition IEP meeting at the high school was scheduled for Nathan; however, he and his family were traveling and they were unable to attend. Consequently, the transition meeting was not held.

Post-tests. During the final session, students completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[©], Nathan earned scores of 40, 32, and 39, respectively, from the three raters. His combined score was 111. His mean score was 37. This time, he described a disability as “a disadvantage in learning” (question 1) and was again able to give accurate descriptions of his medical diagnoses but did not accurately identify his disability as Other Health Impairment. He described an IEP as a document, which was the same response he gave on his pre-IEP Survey[©] but this time made a more serious attempt at identifying what the acronym, IEP, meant by stating, “Integrated Education Plan” (question 4). When asked how an IEP helps him in his education, he demonstrated self-advocacy by responding, “It makes it harder for me to learn because it is far from the board” (question 5), which alluded to his plan for strategic seating in his classes to avoid potential negative behaviors. He also indicated that it helped him, “...by extending due dates” (question 5), which accurately identified one of his accommodations. He described an accommodation or modification was, “A thing that can be used to my advantage” (question 6) and affirmed there were laws to help him in special education. He described a self-advocate as, “A person who can succeed on their own” (question 8) and he stated the reason being a self-advocate was important was “So I can succeed in life” (question 9). He recalled the number of times he had been to his IEP meetings was, “about 5 or 6” (question 10). Even though only one IEP meeting had been held for him at the time of the survey, his

response accurately reflected the number of times he had attended team meetings prior to his special education placement to discuss his progress and next steps for interventions.

When asked if he was comfortable participating in his IEP meetings, he provided a much more negative response than on his pre IEP Survey[©] response. He stated, “I want to get rid of it. I don’t like being seen as a special needs kid. If anyone found out I would be seen as a mental” (question 11). Consistent with his response on the pre IEP Survey[©], he misunderstood the question about what he does at his IEP meetings. He responded, “We discuss what to do at the final meeting,” which accurately described how he had learned in a previous lesson to prepare for his upcoming IEP meeting.

Overall, while Nathan’s responses to most questions were not completely accurate, they were an improvement from his first responses on the IEP Survey[©]. This time, he was able to demonstrate his knowledge acquired through the lessons. For example, he learned there were laws to help him in special education and demonstrated an understanding of how his IEP helped him in his education. He also demonstrated understanding of a self-advocate and that being a self-advocate is important to help him succeed in life. Many of his responses, which earned a score of zero on the pre IEP Survey[©], this time earned scores of 3 and 4, indicating that his answers provided much more specificity. His combined score was 111 and 48 points higher than his first combined score.

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the intervention group earned post-test scores ranging from the 45th to 99th percentile. Nathan’s total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 50th percentile, a gain of thirty-one percentile points from his first score. As depicted in Table 2, his individual scores on the

Autonomy and Self-Regulation domains demonstrated growth, while his scores on the Self-Realization domain remained constant. His scores on the Psychological Empowerment domain decreased.

Table 2

Nathan's Arc's Self-Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	21	57
Self-Regulation	60	80
Psychological Empowerment	17	11
Self-Realization	73	73
Self-Determination Total Score	19	50

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. Nathan did not complete this survey since he had not attended a transition IEP meeting.

Third intervention case study: Charlotte. At the time of the study, Charlotte, a Caucasian female, was a 13-year-old who had been receiving special education services under the category of Other Health Impairment since her second grade year. Charlotte had a diagnosis of ADHD-Inattentive Type. According to her IEP during the 2011-12 school year, Charlotte demonstrated difficulty with starting her work during independent work time. She would use the time to socialize or engage in a preferred activity. When redirected by the teacher, she would often refuse to work or ignore the redirection. When Charlotte completed her work, it was often of poor quality and completed quickly. In addition, she was turning in an average of one late assignment per week, which

negatively impacted her grades. Testing accommodations necessary for her success included an alternate setting for taking tests.

Pre-tests. During the first intervention session, Charlotte demonstrated a negative attitude regarding her participation that day but completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Charlotte obtained a score of 16, 18, and 16, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. Her combined score was 50. Her mean score was 16.7. When Charlotte responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, she denied having a disability. She did not know what an IEP was or what the acronym meant. However, she did indicate that an IEP could help her in her education because it "helps get better grades" (question 5). She also was unable to describe an accommodation or modification and, when asked if there were any laws to help her in special education, she responded, "to be more organized and get out of this class" (question 7). Charlotte did not know what a self-advocate was and was unable to tell why being a self-advocate is important. Finally, Charlotte accurately indicated she had attended her IEP meetings 3 or 4 times but interjected her strong negative feelings toward having an IEP, as indicated by the remainder of her response, "...which I don't need" (question 10). When asked if she was comfortable participating in her IEP meetings, she indicated she was not because certain people shouldn't know about her this well and that the information was her "personal information" and "not theirs" (question 11). When asked to describe what she does at her IEP meetings, she responded, "Talk about how to turn things in more on time" (question 12).

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the

intervention group earned pre-test scores, which ranged from the 19th percentile to the 96th percentile. Charlotte obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 96th percentile, which falls well above the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Charlotte's score was at the 96th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Charlotte's score was at the 85th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Charlotte's score was at the 79th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Charlotte's score was at the 14th percentile. In summary, her individual scores on each of the domains suggested that her skills in Autonomy, Self-Regulation, and Psychological Empowerment skills may have been more developed than her Self-Realization skills. Overall, her self-determination skills were well above the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. In the first of four lessons, students were educated about the nature of a learning disability and Other Health Impairment and were instructed that an IEP is for a student with a disability. At the end of the lesson, students responded to the journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Charlotte responded, "I thought it was OHI but somebody told me it was both when it's not and I feel stupid." Charlotte was referring to having learned at this session that she had a primary

exceptionality of Other Health Impairment and learning disability as a secondary exceptionality. She also identified how it would impact her in the future by her response, “I’ll have more trouble with things and won’t be able to get them to go away.” After the session, the researcher was able to address her frustration and negative perceptions about the session.

During the second lesson, students were instructed about the IEP as a plan to help them reach their goals, about accommodations, modifications, transition plans, and briefly about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities. Following the lesson, students responded to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Charlotte’s response demonstrated understanding of her areas of academic weakness and awareness of accommodations. She stated, “Well, it should be for my goals in math and reading not organization cuz I’m fine with organization. And accommodations should be me being able to sit with my class during a test!” Charlotte felt strongly that she did not need to have a goal in organization or be required to use a separate setting for tests. The researcher took another opportunity to address her frustration after the session by making her aware of her attempts at self-advocacy. She was reassured that she would have input at her next IEP meeting when her service delivery for high school would be discussed.

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Charlotte responded, “Ask questions when needing help, ask for a quieter place to work, and ask when needed.”

The final lesson included instruction on what to expect at the meeting, what not to do, and how students could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments that were too long and hard. Charlotte indicated that she would ask for help or have it read aloud to her.

After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. They were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Charlotte enjoyed designing hers and took pride in her finished product. She designed her Power Point slides to reflect her personal learning style, her necessary accommodations, her IEP goals and progress, and her goals for the future.

IEP meeting participation. At her transition IEP meeting at the high school, Charlotte's participation was observed and rated by three members of her IEP team including the researcher, her prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate her degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the intervention group obtained scores that ranged from 28 to 50 points. Behaviors included introducing herself and IEP team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing her IEP goals and progress;

asking for feedback from team members; stating needed support; expressing her interests, skills, and limits; expressing her goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone. According to ratings from the three observers, Charlotte introduced herself and at least one of the team members at the meeting. However, there was disagreement as to whether she did so with a prompt or cue from an adult. One of the observers assigned her 2 points for demonstrating both behaviors without a prompt or cue from an adult but the other two observers indicated she required a prompt and assigned one point for each behavior. With regard to stating the purpose of the meeting, two of the observers noted that she failed to do so but one observer indicated she did so with a prompt or cue. All three observers agreed that, with prompting, she reviewed her IEP goals and her progress, asked for feedback, stated her necessary supports, expressed her interests, and expressed her goals for the future. Two of the observers also noted that she expressed her skills and limitations but this behavior was not noted by the other observer. There was agreement among the three observers that Charlotte failed to close the meeting by thanking everyone. Her scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 28 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. During the final session, students completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[®], Charlotte earned scores of 37, 39, and 35, respectively, from the three raters. Her combined score was 111. Her mean score was 37. This time, she described a disability as "something your not good at" (question 1). In addition, she was able to demonstrate more acceptance of her own disability this time by describing it as ADHD and reading but did not accurately identify it as Other Health Impairment or Learning Disability. She

described an IEP as, “something you can plan for later in life,” which alluded to her understanding that an IEP could help her plan for her future. In addition, she accurately described what the acronym stood for. When asked how an IEP helps her in her education, she indicated that it, “helps you know what you need to know” (question 5). She stated an accommodation or modification was, “Where you ask,” which was not an accurate definition but demonstrated her understanding that sometimes she might need to request an accommodation. She inaccurately stated there were no laws to help her in special education, but it was noted that her first response was correct and she had marked it out. When asked to describe a self-advocate, her response was the same as her response about an accommodation, which indicated her understanding that asking for help is an example of self-advocacy. She stated the reason being a self-advocate was important was “To be able to stand up for yourself” (question 9). This time, when asked how many times she had been to her IEP meetings, she incorrectly indicated that she had never been to her IEP meeting, even though she had accurately indicated on the pre-test that she had attended 3 to 4 times. Her response on the next question was in contradiction to this response, as well. When asked if she was comfortable participating in her IEP meetings, she stated, “Yes, because I can talk about what my thoughts are” (question 11). When asked to describe what she does at her IEP meetings, she responded, “Talk about your thoughts” (question 12).

Overall, while Charlotte’s responses to most questions were not completely accurate, they demonstrated an improvement in details and attitude from her first responses on the IEP Survey[®]. This time, she was able to demonstrate her knowledge acquired through the lessons. For example, she learned about her disability and

demonstrated an understanding of how her IEP helped her plan for her future. She also demonstrated understanding of a self-advocate and that being a self-advocate is important to help her stand up for herself and ask for help when needed. Many of her responses on the pre IEP Survey[©] earned a score of 0 or 1, indicating she did not know the answer or gave an incorrect answer. This time, most of her responses earned scores of 4, indicating that her answers provided much more specificity and acquired knowledge. Her combined score was 111 and 61 points higher than her first combined score.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the intervention group earned post- scores ranging from the 45th to 99th percentile. Charlotte's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 99th percentile, a gain of three percentile points from her first score. As depicted in Table 3, her individual scores on the Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization domains demonstrated growth, while her score on the Self-Regulation domain decreased.

Table 3

Charlotte's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	96	100
Self-Regulation	85	54
Psychological Empowerment	79	100
Self-Realization	14	88
Self-Determination Total Score	96	99

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what

she shared at the meeting, Charlotte stated, “I shared about whatever was on the slide” (question 1a). When asked how she felt during the meeting, she stated, “I felt good like I got a chance to feel what I'm going to be doing” (question 1b) and that she was glad she had participated because she had a chance to talk to the teachers she would have in high school. When asked how she had prepared for the IEP meeting, she stated she had made the Power Point slides. The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and asked students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Charlotte indicated she could have asked more questions.

Fourth intervention case study: Shelby. At the time of the study, Shelby, a Caucasian female, was a 15-year-old with a learning disability who had been receiving special education services since third grade. According to her IEP during the 2011-12 school year, Shelby demonstrated learning difficulties in the area of math. Based on a curriculum based assessment of general mathematics problem-solving skills, Shelby demonstrated skills at the fourth and fifth grade level. Testing accommodations necessary for her success included an alternate setting for taking tests or assessments when they required more than 15 minutes to complete. In addition, she was allowed a copy of notes or guided notes for all classes to supplement her own notes; she was provided written instructions for all classes when verbal instructions were more than three steps in length; and she was provided visual cues or memory aids in all classes when memorization of material was required.

Pre-tests. During the first intervention session, Shelby completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] with hesitation, indicating that she

would rather spend the time completing her homework. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Shelby obtained a score of 22, 22, and 23, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. Her combined score was 67. Her mean score was 22.3. When Shelby responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, she described a disability as, “When a person isn’t like others and has problems with things” (question 1), and described her own disability with uncertainty as “girls being mean” (question 2). She described an IEP as, “when you go to a meeting with your teachers and they talk about you and your dad or mom is in the room too” (question 3). She did not know what the acronym, IEP, meant but knew that an IEP could help her in her education, “because it helps show what you need to work on” (question 5). She did not know what an accommodation or modification was and was not aware of any laws to help her in special education. She also was unsure of what a self-advocate was and what the importance of being a self-advocate was. Finally, Shelby indicated she had attended her IEP meeting once. When asked whether she was comfortable participating in her IEP meeting, she indicated she was comfortable, “because it helps a lot with what I am needing to know” (question 11). Also, when asked what she did at her IEP meeting, she indicated that she “talked about things I am needing help in and things that I am doing perfectly fine” (question 12).

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the intervention group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 19th percentile to the 96th percentile. Shelby obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 73rd percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy

domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Shelby's score was at the 63rd percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Shelby's score was at the 95th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Shelby's score was at the 79th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Shelby's score was at the 37th percentile. In summary, her individual scores on each of the domains suggested that her skills in self-realization may not have been as well developed as her autonomy, self-regulation, and psychological empowerment skills. Overall, her self-determination skills were average when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. In the first of four lessons, students were educated about the nature of a learning disability and Other Health Impairment and were instructed that an IEP is for a student with a disability. At the end of the lesson, students responded to the journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Shelby did not acknowledge her disability and responded, "Don't think I have one but thanks."

During the second lesson, students were instructed about the IEP as a plan to help them reach their goals, about accommodations, modifications, transition plans, and briefly about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities. Shelby demonstrated a negative attitude throughout the session and participated minimally. Following the lesson, students responded to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Shelby's negativity was portrayed in her response:

“I don't have problems in math. I am doing just fine by myself. Teachers don't help me I ask for it. I'm not in those classes any more so I don't know what the point of this is for. I don't need this thing I have homework to do.” Even though she did not directly identify her IEP goal, her response demonstrated knowledge of her math goal.

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. Shelby was more receptive to the material presented in the lesson and demonstrated a more positive attitude than the previous session. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Shelby responded, “Being by yourself, but having little bit of help, means stand up for yourself.”

The final lesson included instruction on what to expect at the IEP meeting, what not to do, and how students could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments that were too long and hard. Shelby responded, “Maybe you can ask your teachers or parent for help and tell them that you are struggling and telling them that the tests are really long and talk to the teachers about them being way too hard and they could, like, color code them.”

After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. They were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were

shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Shelby designed her Power Point slides to reflect her personal learning style, her necessary accommodations, her IEP goals and progress, and her goals for the future.

IEP meeting participation. At her transition IEP meeting at the high school, Shelby's participation was observed and rated by three members of her IEP team including the researcher, her prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate her degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the intervention group obtained scores that ranged from 28 to 50 points. Behaviors included introducing herself and IEP team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing her IEP goals and progress; asking for feedback from team members; stating needed support; expressing her interests, skills, and limits; expressing her goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone. According to ratings from two of the three observers, Shelby demonstrated all of the behaviors without a prompt or cue, with the exception of closing the meeting by thanking everyone, which all three observers noted that she failed to do so. The same observer also noted that Shelby required a prompt or cue to introduce herself and IEP team members, while the other two observers noted that she did so independently. In addition, the same observer noted that Shelby did not express skills and limits at all while the other two observers noted that she did so without a prompt or cue. Her scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 50 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. During the final session, students completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to determine growth. On this day, Shelby demonstrated a negative attitude and required encouragement to complete the instruments. On the IEP Survey[©], Shelby earned scores of 19, 20, and 21, respectively, from the three raters. Her combined score was 60. Her mean score was 20. She described a disability as "where you have different problems than everyone" (question 1) and while she was not able to identify her disability, her response, "math" (question 2), indicated that she was aware of her IEP goal to address math skills. She described an IEP as "where you talk about your struggles" (question 3) but could not recall what the acronym, IEP, meant. When asked how an IEP helps her in her education, she indicated that it, "shows you where you are needing help in" (question 5). She was not sure what an accommodation or modification was but attempted to define it by responding, "Where they modify you" (question 6). She indicated there were no laws to help her in special education and could not recall what a self-advocate was and stated the reason being a self-advocate was important was because it "helps you be you" (question 9). She accurately recalled attending her IEP meetings once but did not provide a response when asked if she was comfortable participating in her IEP meetings

Overall, Shelby's responses to most questions were similar to her pre IEP Survey[©] scores. However, she did demonstrate knowledge of her area of weakness in math, which was different from her pre-test response about her disability in which she described it as "girls being mean" (question 2). With the exception of this question, she earned the same scores on each question on the pre and post survey. Her combined score,

however, was 7 points lower than her first combined score, as she did not answer the last two questions on the post IEP Survey[®].

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], students in the intervention group earned post- test scores ranging from the 45th to 99th percentile. Shelby's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 45th percentile, a decrease of twenty-eight percentile points from her first score. Overall, her individual post-test scores on the Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization domains demonstrated growth from her pre-test scores. However, her individual scores on the Autonomy and Self-Regulation domains demonstrated regression, as depicted in Table 4. These lower scores might have been attributed to the negativity she exhibited during this session.

Table 4

Shelby's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	63	53
Self-Regulation	95	37
Psychological Empowerment	79	100
Self-Realization	37	55
Self-Determination Total Score	73	45

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what she shared at the meeting, Shelby indicated she had shared her Power Point. When asked how she felt during the meeting, she indicated she felt “nervous” (question 1b). When asked if she was glad that she had participated, she indicated indifference. When asked

how she had prepared for the IEP meeting, she stated she had practiced the Power Point. The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and asked students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Shelby indicated, “No, we just talk about me and are struggles, stuff like that” (question 2).

Fifth intervention case study: Allie. At the time of the study, Allie, a Caucasian female, was a 13-year-old who had been receiving special education services under the category of Other Health Impairment since the previous school year in 7th grade; until then, Allie had been home schooled. Allie had a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Effects, which manifested as delays in cognitive skills, self-help skills, language skills, and social skills. According to her IEP during the 2011-12 school year, Allie demonstrated learning difficulties in the areas of math, reading, and writing. In the area of math, Allie’s skills were at the 2nd to 3rd grade level based on results from a curriculum based assessment of general mathematics problem-solving skills. In the area of reading, based on results from a curriculum based assessment, Allie’s comprehension skills were comparable to those of a 2nd grade student, and her reading fluency skills were comparable to those of a 1st grade student. Allie’s written expression skills were evaluated using a curriculum based measure and indicated that her score fell in the 1st percentile. Allie received a modified curriculum in a special education setting for these core subjects. Testing accommodations necessary for her success included the use of alternate indicators as opposed to the general education curricular standards. Additional testing accommodations allowed assessments to be read aloud to her and to take place in an alternate setting. Other accommodations included the use of picture cues when reading

was above her level; directions delivered one step at a time when multiple steps were involved; the allowance to draw pictures for written work; the use of a calculator for mathematic computations; and the monitoring of decision-making in social settings.

Pre-tests. During the first intervention session, Allie willingly completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Using the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Allie obtained a score of 17, 14, and 14, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. Her combined score was 45. Her mean score was 15. When Allie responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, she described a disability as, "something you have a hard time with a little" (question 1), and described her own disability as reading and added, "It wasn't my fault" (question 2). She described an IEP as, "Something you have" (question 3), but did not know what the acronym, IEP, meant. When asked on the survey how an IEP could help her in her education, she responded, "Some teachers help you when something you need help with" (question 5). She was unable to describe an accommodation or modification and, was unsure if there were any laws to help her in special education. Allie did not know what a self-advocate was and was unable to tell why being a self-advocate is important. Finally, Allie indicated she had attended her IEP meetings on a biweekly basis, which was in reference to her after school tutoring. When asked on the survey if she was comfortable participating in her IEP meetings, she indicated she was. When asked to describe what she does at her IEP meetings, her response indicated she misunderstood the question. She responded, "The teacher can help you because some people have a hard time with something" (question 12).

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the

intervention group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 19th percentile to the 96th percentile. Allie obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 50th percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Allie's score was at the 34th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Allie's score was at the 96th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Allie's score was at the 59th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Allie's score was at the 55th percentile. In summary, her individual scores on each of the domains suggested that her skills in Self-Regulation were more developed than her Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization skills. Overall, her self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. In the first of four lessons, students were educated about the nature of a learning disability and Other Health Impairment and were instructed that an IEP is for a student with a disability. At the end of the lesson, students responded to the journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Allie responded, "Well, it might be hard sometimes but the one thing I know is I'm going to read when I am 15 or 16." She also identified how it would impact her in the future by her response, "It will affect me because it was my brain-I can handle it though."

During the second lesson, students were instructed about the IEP as a plan to help them reach their goals, about accommodations, modifications, transition plans, and briefly about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities. Following the lesson, students responded to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Allie's response demonstrated understanding of her areas of academic weakness in math and reading; she responded, "Math and reading-that's it." She did not indicate an awareness of her accommodations.

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Allie's response indicated that she had not fully understood the concept of self-advocacy. She stated, "I guess people helping me is better."

The final lesson included instruction on what to expect at the meeting, what not to do, and how students could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Allie's response demonstrated a noticeably increased comfort level in the sessions. She stated, "Hey I need help-yeah, you. Just kidding- LOL. Umm I need help-can you help me? I need it. Thank you!! LOL!"

After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. They were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their

individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Allie worked with her special education case manager to design slides to reflect her personal learning style, her necessary accommodations, her IEP goals and progress, and her goals for the future.

IEP meeting participation. A transition IEP meeting at the high school was scheduled for Allie; however, her parents decided that she would not be attending high school the following school year in a public school setting. Consequently, the transition meeting was not held.

Post-tests. During the final session, students completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[©], Allie earned scores of 13, 15, and 13, respectively, from the three raters. Her combined score was 41. Her mean score was 13.7. This time, she described a disability as "something you need help with" (question 1), which was similar to her response on the pre IEP Survey[©]. In addition, she continued to refer to reading as her disability. Overall, Allie's responses were consistent with her responses on the pre IEP Survey[©] but this time, she did not give as many detailed answers as she did before. Her combined score was 41 and 4 points lower than her first combined score.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the intervention group earned post- scores ranging from the 45th to 99th percentile. Allie's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 91st percentile, a gain of forty-one percentile points from her first score. As depicted in Table 5, her individual scores on the

Autonomy and Self-Realization domains demonstrated growth, while her scores on the Self-Regulation and Psychological Empowerment domains decreased.

Table 5

Allie's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	50	91
Self-Regulation	96	85
Psychological Empowerment	59	44
Self-Realization	55	73
Self-Determination Total Score	50	91

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. Since Allie did not participate in a transition IEP meeting, she was not required to complete this survey.

Sixth intervention case study: Tracy. At the time of the study, Tracy, a Caucasian female, was a 14-year-old who had been receiving special education services under the category of Other Health Impairment since her sixth grade year. Tracy had diagnoses of seizure disorder and ADHD. According to her IEP during the 2011-12 school year, Tracy demonstrated learning difficulties in mathematics and often did not advocate for help. According to a curriculum based assessment of her general mathematics problem-solving skills, Tracy demonstrated below average skills at the 8th grade level and gaps in her acquisition of 5th grade through 7th grade concepts. Testing accommodations necessary for her success included an alternate setting for taking tests. Additional classroom accommodations included guided notes when note-taking required

more than 20 words; study guides for tests; and an extension of one day for late assignments.

Pre-tests. During the first intervention session, Tracy demonstrated a somewhat negative attitude regarding her participation but completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©]. Using the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Tracy obtained a score of 19, 17, and 17, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[©] raters. Her combined score was 53. Her mean score was 17.7. When Tracy responded to the IEP Survey[©] items, she did not know what a disability was and did not think she had one. She described an IEP as, "A thing where you get extra help" (question 3), but did not know what the acronym, IEP, meant. However, she did indicate that an IEP could help her in her education because it could help her get good grades and turn her homework in on time, which alluded to her areas of weakness. She was unable to describe an accommodation or modification. In addition, she did not think there were laws to help her in special education and did not know what a self-advocate was or why it was important to be a self-advocate. Finally, Tracy accurately indicated she had attended her IEP meeting once and indicated her indifference about her participation. When asked to describe what she does at her IEP meetings, she responded, "Talk to your parents about how your doing in school" (question 12).

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the intervention group earned pre-test scores which ranged from the 19th percentile to the 96th percentile. Tracy obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 33rd percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy,

Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Tracy's score was at the 28th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Tracy's score was at the 85th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Tracy's score was at the 44th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Tracy's score was at the 37th percentile. In summary, her individual scores on each of the domains suggested that her skills in Self-Regulation were more developed than her Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization skills. Overall, her self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. During the first of four lessons, students were educated about the nature of a learning disability and Other Health Impairment and were instructed that an IEP is for a student with a disability. At the end of the lesson, students responded to the journal prompt: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Tracy responded, "I think my disability is either seizures or ADHD, and I feel sad that I have those things but I have hope it will go away." She also identified how it would impact her in the future by her response, "It will affect my learning and paying attention."

During the second lesson, students were instructed about the IEP as a plan to help them reach their goals, about accommodations, modifications, transition plans, and briefly about laws that protect their rights as students with disabilities. Following the

lesson, students responded to a journal prompt: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Tracy's response demonstrated understanding of her areas of academic weakness and awareness of accommodations. She stated, "My goal is to get better in math and my accommodation is to turn in my work on time!"

The third session focused on educating students on learning styles and ways to advocate for their needs. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to respond to the journal prompt: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Tracy was absent for this session.

The final lesson included instruction on what to expect at the meeting, what not to do, and how students could participate and demonstrate self-advocacy. A brief portion of the lesson also provided students with the opportunity to practice appropriate participation in the IEP meeting. Following the lesson, students were asked to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Tracy indicated that she would ask for help if it was too hard.

After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students were introduced to an IEP meeting script, which would help guide them through their IEP meeting. They were given time to fill in the blanks and to check appropriate boxes to reflect their individual information. Students were also given a Power Point template and they were shown how they would be able to design it on their own and use it to lead their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. Tracy designed her Power Point slides to reflect her personal learning style, her necessary accommodations, her IEP goals and progress, and her goals for the future.

IEP meeting participation. A transition IEP meeting at the high school was not scheduled for Tracy because she moved shortly after the final session. Consequently, she did not have the opportunity to complete post-tests or the IEP Meeting Reflection survey.

First control group case study: Lori. At the time of the study, Lori, a Caucasian female, was a 13-year-old with a learning disability who had been receiving special education services since the previous school year in seventh grade. According to her IEP for the 2011-12 school year, Lori demonstrated difficulty with reading comprehension. Based on results from a curriculum based assessment, Lori experienced significant difficulty comprehending text she read even at the 5th grade level. Testing accommodations necessary for her success included an alternate setting for taking tests. The test questions were also read aloud to her. In the classroom, she was provided a copy of notes when note-taking was required. For lengthy assignments, she was allowed up to one additional day for completion.

Pre-tests. All students in the control group were given the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Lori obtained a score of 16, 21, and 23, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. Her combined score was 60. Her mean score was 20. When Lori responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, she described a disability as, "were your not good at something" (question 1). She did not accurately identify her own disability but her response, "Reading, spelling" (question 2) indicated her awareness of her areas of academic weakness. She did not know what an IEP was or what the acronym meant. However, she did indicate that an IEP could help her in her education in reading. She also was unable to describe an accommodation or modification and did not know there were laws to help her in special education. Lori did

not know what a self-advocate was but indicated that being a self-advocate is important, “So you can learn” (question 9). Finally, Lori accurately indicated she had never attended her IEP meetings and stated that she would not be comfortable participating in her IEP meetings because she would not talk much and would “get on her phone” (question 12).

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the control group earned pre-test scores, which ranged from the 17th percentile to the 67th percentile. Lori obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 18th percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Lori’s score was at the 18th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Lori’s score was at the 31st percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Lori’s score was at the 79th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Lori’s score was at the 73rd percentile. In summary, her individual scores on each of the domains suggested that her skills in Autonomy were not as developed as her Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization skills. Overall, her self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. As a member of the control group, Lori did not participate in any of the self-advocacy lessons; however, she did complete the journal prompts. The first prompt asked: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Lori responded, “Reading is my disability.” She also described how it would impact her in the future by stating, “I think it will affect me by reading big words that I don't know how to pronounce.”

The second journal prompt asked: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Lori’s response demonstrated understanding of her IEP goal in math and her area of academic weakness in math. She also demonstrated knowledge of one of her testing accommodations as indicated in her response, “They take me out for tests.” The third journal prompt asked: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Lori responded, “Telling what you need help with, asking for help, and asking questions.” The final journal prompt asked students to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Lori responded, “I would tell the teacher that they are hard and long. I would also ask for help from the teacher.” After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students in the control group were not provided with any tools to help them prepare for the IEP meeting.

IEP meeting participation. At her transition IEP meeting at the high school, Lori’s participation was observed and rated by three members of her IEP team including the researcher, her prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate her degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the control group earned scores that ranged from

6 to 14 points. Behaviors included introducing herself and IEP team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing her IEP goals and progress; asking for feedback from team members; stating needed support; expressing her interests, skills, and limits; expressing her goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone.

According to ratings from the three observers, Lori did not introduce herself and at least one of the team members at the meeting, did not state the purpose of the meeting, and did not review her IEP goals and her progress. However, there was disagreement with regard to her asking for feedback, as one of the observers noted her as doing so with a prompt or cue and assigned her one point; the other two observers noted that she did not demonstrate this behavior at all and assigned zero points. All three observers agreed that she did not state needed supports during the meeting and assigned zero points. With regard to expressing her interests, all three observers agreed that she demonstrated this behavior. However, one of the observers noted that she required a prompt or cue to do so and assigned her one point, whereas the other two observers noted that she did so independently and assigned her two points. With regard to expressing her skills and limits, there was disagreement among the observers, as two of them noted that Lori did so with a prompt or cue from an adult, while the other observer noted that Lori did not demonstrate this behavior at all. There was more disagreement on whether Lori expressed her goals for the future, as well; two of the observers noted that Lori demonstrated the behavior but disagreed on whether she needed a prompt or cue. One assigned 2 points, indicating that Lori had done so independently, and the other observer assigned 1 point, indicating that Lori had done so but required a prompt or cue. The other observer did not note the behavior at all and assigned zero points. There was

agreement among all three observers that Lori failed to close the meeting by thanking everyone. Her scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 11 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. After intervention group students had participated in the final lesson, students in both groups completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[©], Lori earned post-test scores of 22, 24, and 24, respectively, from the three raters. Her combined score was 70. Her mean score was 23.3. This time, she described a disability as "What your not good at" (question 1), which was very similar to her response on the pre IEP Survey[©]. Her description of her disability continued to include reading. She still did not know what an IEP was or what the acronym meant. This time, when asked on the survey how an IEP helps her in her education, she stated, "To see what I am not good at", which differed from her original response of "reading" (pre IEP Survey, question 5). Her responses to the next questions about accommodations, special education laws, and self-advocacy indicated that she still did not know what an accommodation or modification was, did not know there were laws to help her in special education, and did not know what a self-advocate was. When asked on the survey why being a self-advocate is important, this time she indicated, "To ask you for help" (question 9), which was different from her first response, "so you can learn" (pre IEP Survey, question 9), although still incorrect. Her response regarding the number of times she has been to her IEP meeting was unchanged from her original response, but still accurate. When asked about her comfort level with participating in her IEP meetings, she reiterated that she had not attended any of her

meetings; she also continued to describe what her participation would look like if she did attend, which alluded to texting on her phone.

Overall, Lori's responses to most questions were very similar to her responses on the pre IEP Survey[©]. However, this time, she was able to identify how an IEP could help her in her education, "To see what I'm not good at" (question 5), which alluded to her understanding that an IEP documents a student's areas of strengths and weaknesses and identifies a goal to address an academic area in need of improvement. This response, while somewhat vague, was an improvement from her original response to this question when she was unable to give a response. Her combined score was 70, which was 10 points higher than her first combined score.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the control group earned post- scores ranging from the 16th to 45th percentile. Lori's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 22nd percentile, a gain of four percentile points from her first score. As depicted in Table 6, her individual scores on the Autonomy, Self-Regulation, and Self-Realization domains demonstrated growth, while her score on the Psychological Empowerment domain remained constant.

Table 6

Lori's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	18	21
Self-Regulation	31	37
Psychological Empowerment	79	79
Self-Realization	73	88
Self-Determination Total Score	18	22

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what she shared at the meeting, Lori stated, “That I was going to be a math teacher and a softball coach” (question 1a). When asked how she felt during the meeting, she indicated she felt, “Alright” (question 1b) and that she was glad she had participated, “Because I felt that I did something” (question 1c). When asked how she had prepared for the IEP meeting, she indicated she had not prepared for the meeting. The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and asked students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Lori indicated she could have talked more.

Second control group case study: Liz. At the time of the study, Liz, a Hispanic female, was a 13-year-old with a learning disability who had been receiving special education services since her 1st grade year. According to her IEP for the 2011-12 school year, Liz demonstrated difficulty with reading comprehension, written expression, math problem-solving, and self-advocacy. Based on results from a curriculum based assessment, Liz’s reading comprehension skills were comparable to those of a 5th grader. In the area of written expression, her skills were comparable to those of a 6th grader, as evidenced by curriculum based assessment results. In the area of mathematics, Liz’s skills were evaluated using a curriculum based assessment over general mathematics problem-solving skills. Results indicated that her skills were at the 4th grade level. In the area of self-advocacy, Liz demonstrated low self-confidence when dealing with situations involving math and vocabulary and would rarely ask questions when needed. She was

receiving a modified math curriculum in a special education setting, as well as modified assignments for social studies and science to include only essential outcomes.

Testing accommodations necessary for her success included an alternate setting for taking tests with extended time for completion, as well as the use of a calculator, graphic organizers, visual aids, and manipulatives for math assessments. In the classroom, accommodations included a copy of notes to supplement her own to check for accuracy; small group instruction for reading, math, and social studies; and repeated instructions to check for understanding during instruction. In addition, she was allowed an extension of one day to complete her assignments and assessments when needed.

Pre-tests. All students in the control group were given the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Liz obtained a score of 22, 22, and 23, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. Her combined score was 67. Her mean score was 22.3. When Liz responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, she described a disability as, "When you can't do something" (question 1) but she did not know what her own disability was. She described an IEP as "When your parents have meetings with your teachers or if they changed something in school" (question 3). She did not know what the acronym, IEP, meant but indicated that an IEP could help her in her education, "Because they know what you know or what you don't know and if you don't know they will work with you on it" (question 5). She did not know what an accommodation or modification was. She did know there were laws to help her in special education. Liz did not know what a self-advocate was and did not know the importance of being a self-advocate. Finally, Liz accurately indicated she had attended her IEP meeting once. She stated that she was not comfortable participating in her IEP meeting,

“Because your just sitting there an staring at the teachers” (question 11). When asked on the survey what she did at the IEP meeting, she responded, “Just sit there and smile” (question 12).

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[©], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the control group earned pre-test scores, which ranged from the 17th percentile to the 67th percentile. Liz obtained a Total Self-Determination pre-test score at the 17th percentile, which fell in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Liz’s score was at the 7th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Liz’s score was at the 60th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Liz’s score was at the 100th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Lori’s score was at the 88th percentile. In summary, her individual scores on each of the domains suggested that her skills in Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization skills may have been much better developed than her Autonomy skills. Overall, her self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. As a member of the control group, Liz did not participate in any of the self-advocacy lessons; however, she did complete the journal

prompts. The first prompt asked: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Liz responded, “Reading and math.” While she didn’t directly identify her disability as a learning disability, her response reflected an awareness of some of her academic weaknesses. She also gave an insightful answer in her description of how her disability would impact her in the future by stating, “It will affect me in the future because there is some things in life that include math and reading like going to the groceries or if you have children they will ask me to read their homework!” The second journal prompt asked: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Liz responded, “IEP goals are reading, writing, math-my accommodations are when the teacher helps like they give us more time or give us extra days to get something done. They help me understand things better and I appreciate all their hard work.” She accurately identified her IEP goals, with the exception of self-advocacy, and accurately described two of her accommodations.

The third journal prompt asked: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Students in the control group did not participate in the lesson but responded to the same journal prompt. Liz responded, “Telling someone what you need, asking for help when you need it, asking more questions.” This response indicated an awareness of her need to increase her self-advocacy, even though she had failed to mention it in the previous journal prompt when she described her IEP goals.

The final journal prompt asked students to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Liz responded, “First of all, I would talk to a teacher to see what can we do about to see if we can help me. And ask her if we can shorten them.” After completing responses to the

final journal prompt, students in the control group were not provided with any tools to help them prepare for the IEP meeting.

IEP meeting participation. At her transition IEP meeting at the high school, Liz's participation was observed and rated by three members of her IEP team including the researcher, her prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate her degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the control group earned scores that ranged from 6 to 14 points. Behaviors included introducing herself and IEP team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing her IEP goals and progress; asking for feedback from team members; stating needed support; expressing her interests, skills, and limits; expressing her goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone. According to ratings from the three observers, Liz did not demonstrate any of the behaviors, which earned her zero points on the rubric, with the exception of closing the meeting by thanking everyone. All three observers noted that she did so independently and each assigned 2 points on the rubric. Her scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 6 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. After intervention group students had participated in the final lesson, students in both groups completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[©], Liz earned scores of 29, 31, and 30, respectively, from the three raters. Her combined score was 90. Her mean score was 30. This time, she described a disability as "When you need help on something like reading, writing, and things like that" (question 1), which was more detailed than her response on the pre IEP Survey[©]. This time, she was able to define her disability as math

and reading, another improvement from her response on the pre IEP Survey[®] when she was unable to give a response. When asked on the survey to tell what an IEP is, the nature of her response was consistent with her original response, which contained details about an IEP meeting. She still was unable to tell what the IEP acronym meant. When asked on the survey how an IEP helps her in her education, the nature of her response was consistent with her original response describing how a teacher helps students identify areas in need of improvement. This time, when asked if there were any laws to help her in special education, she was uncertain, which was in contrast to her original response when she indicated there were laws to help her in special education. When asked to define an accommodation or modification, this time she described it as, “When they change something in your IEP” (question 6). While this response was inaccurate, she indicated she did not know what an accommodation or modification was on the pre IEP Survey[®]. When asked on the survey to define a self-advocate, she originally did not know. However, this time, she described a self-advocate as, “When you help yourself” (question 8). She still was unsure about why it was important to be a self-advocate. Her response regarding the number of times she had been to her IEP meeting was unchanged from her original response, but still accurate. She indicated she had attended her IEP meeting once. When asked about her comfort level with participating in her IEP meetings, this time she indicated, “Yes, because you know what to expect from your teacher and I like hearing what good things teachers say about me” (question 11). Her description of her participation at the meeting was consistent with her original response, which indicated passive participation.

Overall, Liz's responses to most questions were similar to her responses on the pre IEP Survey[©]. However, this time, some of her responses contained more details. In addition, she gave a description of her areas of academic weaknesses to describe her disability, which was an improvement from her original response in that she could not identify her own disability. Also, this time she attempted to describe an accommodation or modification; even though her answer was incorrect, it suggested an increase in self-confidence compared to her original response in which she indicated uncertainty. This was also evident in her attempt to define a self-advocate. Her combined score was 90, which was 23 points higher than her first combined score.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the control group earned post-test scores ranging from the 16th to 45th percentile. Liz's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 26th percentile, a gain of nine percentile points from her first score. As depicted in Table 7, her individual scores on the Autonomy domain demonstrated growth while her scores on the Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization domains remained constant. Her score on the Self-Regulation domain decreased slightly.

Table 7

Liz's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	7	19
Self-Regulation	60	54
Psychological Empowerment	100	100
Self-Realization	88	88
Self-Determination Total Score	17	26

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what she shared at the meeting, Liz accurately stated that she had shared nothing. When asked how she felt during the meeting, she exclaimed she felt, “Good” (question 1b) and that she was glad she had participated. She stated, “Yes, I was happy because I knew what to expect and my goals” (question 1c). When asked how she had prepared for the IEP meeting, she indicated she had not prepared for the meeting and, “Just went” (question 1d). The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and asked students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Liz responded, “No. Not really just listen” (question 2).

Third control group case study: Landon. At the time of the study, Landon, a Caucasian male, was a 14-year-old with a learning disability who had been receiving special education services since his second grade school year. According to his IEP for the 2011-12 school year, Landon demonstrated learning difficulties with mathematics. Based on results from a curriculum based assessment of general mathematics concepts and problem-solving, Landon’s skills were at the 7th grade level. Testing accommodations necessary for his success included an alternate setting for taking tests with the allowance of extended time for completion. Other accommodations in the classroom included repetition and review of math concepts during instruction to check for understanding.

Pre-tests. All students in the control group were given the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Landon obtained a score of 33, 31, and 38, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. His combined score was 102. His mean score was 34. When Landon responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, he described a disability as, "were some can't do something" (question 1). He inaccurately identified his own disability as "spelling" (question 2). He defined an IEP as, "A contract I guess that says that teachers can help you with what you need help with" (question 3). He was not able to define accurately what the acronym, IEP, meant. However, he did indicate that an IEP could help him in his education in that it, "Tells teachers that you need help. You get special help" (question 5). He could not give an accurate definition of an accommodation or modification but attempted with his response, "To change something" (question 6). He did know there were laws to help him in special education, namely, "Leave No Child Behind" (question 7). Landon did not know what a self-advocate was but made an attempt to define it as, "Staying away from something" (question 8), but he demonstrated a notion of the concept of self-advocacy when he indicated that being a self-advocate is important, "To be confident in yourself" (question 9). Finally, Landon accurately indicated he had attended his IEP meeting once; he had both positive and negative feelings about his comfort level with participating in his IEP meeting because he felt important and "weird" (question 11). When asked on the survey about what he did at his IEP meeting, he indicated, "Sit there" (question 12).

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the control group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 17th percentile to the 67th

percentile. Landon obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 21st percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Landon's score was at the 30th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Landon's score was at the 67th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Landon's score was at the 11th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Landon's score was at the 24th percentile. In summary, his individual scores on each of the domains suggested that his skills in Autonomy, Self-Regulation, and Self-Realization were more developed than his Psychological Empowerment skills, which fell well below average. Overall, his self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. As a member of the control group, Landon did not participate in any of the self-advocacy lessons; however, he did complete the journal prompts. The first prompt asked: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Landon responded, "I think spelling is my disability," which accurately reflected an area of weakness for him but inaccurately described his disability. He described how it would impact him in the future by stating, "I think it will affect me in the future in college maybe—my grades and stuff so I would like to get better at it."

The second journal prompt asked: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Landon's response inaccurately described his IEP goal in math. He responded, "My goals are to spell better and read better." He did not mention any of his accommodations. The third journal prompt asked: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Landon responded, "Try to teach myself better spelling, talk to teachers when I need help by raising my hand, and talk to the counselor if I need to." The final journal prompt asked students to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Landon responded, "I would try to ask a teacher or use an "Oops pass" the next day if I did not get it done. But if the teacher does not accept it then I would say 'I don't get it'." After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students in the control group were not provided with any tools to help them prepare for the IEP meeting.

IEP meeting participation. A transition IEP meeting at the high school was set up for Landon but he did not attend. Therefore, his IEP meeting participation was unable to be observed.

Post-tests. After intervention group students had participated in the final lesson, students in both groups completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[®], Landon earned post-test scores of 33, 33, and 30, respectively, from the three raters. His combined score was 96. His mean score was 32. This time, his definition of a disability was not as detailed as his original response; this time, he defined it as, "A defect" (question 1). His description of his own disability continued to include spelling, but this time, he added math, which accurately defined his area of disability, although he did not give the formal definition of

learning disability. His definition of an IEP, “Goal or helper” (question 3), was much less detailed than his original response. He still was unable to identify what the acronym, IEP, meant but this time did not attempt to respond as he did on the pre IEP Survey[©]. When asked on the survey how an IEP helps him in his education, he gave a similar, albeit less detailed, response than he did on the pre IEP Survey[©]. This time, he stated, “gives me extra help” (question 5). He still did not know what an accommodation or modification was but gave a less detailed response this time. His response regarding whether there were any laws to help him in special education was the same as his first response of, “Leave No Child Behind” (question 7). When asked on the survey to define a self-advocate, he still attempted a response, although it remained inaccurate. When asked on the survey why being a self-advocate is important, this time he indicated, “Depending on yourself” (question 9), which was similar to his first response, but less detailed. His response regarding the number of times he had been to his IEP meeting was unchanged from his original response, but still accurate. When asked about his comfort level with participating in his IEP meetings, his response did not portray a combination of negative and positive sentiments; this time, he only reiterated his negative perception that it, “Feels weird, out of place” (question 11). He also provided a similar response about what he did at his IEP meeting when he indicated he passively participates by sitting in on the meeting. However, this time, he indicated that sometimes he is asked questions as well.

Overall, Landon’s responses to most questions were very similar to his responses on the pre IEP Survey[©]. However, this time, he was able to identify that math was his area of disability when he had only indicated spelling, which was not an area of

disability. All other responses demonstrated similar ideas but fewer details. His combined score was 96 and 6 points lower than his first combined score.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], students in the control group earned post- test scores ranging from the 16th to 45th percentile. Landon's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 22nd percentile, a decrease of one percentile point from his first score. As depicted in Table 8, his individual scores on the Self-Regulation domain remained constant, while his scores on the Autonomy and Self-Realization domains decreased. His score on the Psychological Empowerment domain demonstrated significant growth.

Table 8

Landon's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	30	22
Self-Regulation	67	67
Psychological Empowerment	11	79
Self-Realization	24	14
Self-Determination Total Score	21	22

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. Since Landon was not present at his transition IEP meeting, he did not complete this survey.

Fourth control group case study: Alex. At the time of the study, Alex, a Caucasian male, was a 15-year-old with a learning disability who had been receiving special education services since his 5th grade school year. According to his IEP for the

2011-12 school year, Alex demonstrated learning difficulties in reading comprehension, mathematics, and language. In the area of reading comprehension, Alex's skills were at the 3rd grade level based on results from a reading benchmark assessment. In the area of mathematics, a curriculum based assessment showed that Alex struggled with content vocabulary, which impacted his math problem-solving ability. In the area of language, Alex demonstrated below average language skills as evidenced by the Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test. Testing accommodations necessary for his success included an alternate setting for taking tests, in addition to extended time for completion. He also was allowed to have the test questions read aloud to him and allowed to have vocabulary explained to him when it was not being assessed. In the classroom, he was provided support for proofreading and revisions of written work.

Pre-tests. All students in the control group were given the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Alex obtained a score of 7, 7, and 7, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. His combined score was 21. His mean score was 7. When Alex responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, he described a disability as, "Learning differently" (question 1), which is how he described his own disability as well. He did not know what an IEP was or what the acronym meant. He also was unable to describe an accommodation or modification. When asked on the survey if there were laws to help him in special education, he indicated there were not. Alex did not know what a self-advocate was and did not know why being a self-advocate is important. Finally, Alex did not know if he had ever been to his IEP meetings and did not know if he would be comfortable participating in his IEP meetings. He also did not know what he would do if he did attend.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the control group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 17th percentile to the 67th percentile. Alex obtained a Total Self-Determination pre-test score at the 31st percentile, which falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Alex's score was at the 13th percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Alex's score was at the 90th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Alex's score was at the 100th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Alex's score was at the 96th percentile. In summary, his individual scores on each of the domains suggested that his skills in Autonomy may not have been as well developed as his Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization skills. Overall, his self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. As a member of the control group, Alex did not participate in any of the self-advocacy lessons; however, he did complete the journal prompts. The first prompt asked: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Alex responded, "I think I have a learning disability and I feel strong that I can deal with it." He also described how

it would impact him in the future by stating, “Right now I can deal with it but maybe in the future I won't have a disability.”

The second journal prompt asked: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Alex’s response demonstrated understanding of one of his IEP goals in math and a personal goal. His response also indicated an awareness of his accommodations. He responded, “I have math and science goals. I want to get better grades in science. I get help with homework, they read questions, have small groups for [study hall].”

The third journal prompt asked: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Alex responded, “Ask more questions in class, get more help with homework, and study better.” The final journal prompt asked students to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Alex responded, “I would come in for help and ask a few questions. Then I would have my parents help me.” After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students in the control group were not provided with any tools to help them prepare for the IEP meeting.

IEP meeting participation. At his transition IEP meeting at the high school, Alex’s participation was observed and rated by three members of his IEP team including the researcher, his prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate his degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the control group earned scores that ranged from 6 to 14 points. Behaviors included introducing himself and IEP team members; stating the purpose of the meeting; reviewing his IEP goals and progress; asking for feedback

from team members; stating needed support; expressing his interests, skills, and limits; expressing his goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone.

According to ratings from the three observers, Alex did not introduce himself and did not introduce at least one of the team members at the meeting. He did not state the purpose of the meeting, did not review his IEP goals and his progress, and did not ask for feedback. However, there was disagreement with regard to his stating needed support. One of the observers noted him as doing so with a prompt or cue and assigned him one point; the other two observers noted that he did not demonstrate this behavior at all and assigned zero points. With regard to expressing his interests, all three observers agreed that he did so with a prompt or cue from an adult. There was disagreement, however, among the three observers with regard to expressing his skills and limits. Only one observer noted this behavior and assigned one point. The other two assigned zero points for not having observed this behavior. There was further disagreement regarding expressing his goals for the future, as two of the observers noted that he did so with a prompt or cue from an adult and the other observer did not observe him doing so. All three observers agreed that he did not close the meeting by thanking everyone. His scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 7 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. After intervention group students had participated in the final lesson, students in both groups completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[®], Alex earned scores of 21, 23, and 21, respectively, from the three raters. His combined score was 65. His mean score was 21.7. This time, he described a disability as, "When you need special help for stuff"

(question 1), which was similar to his response on the pre IEP Survey[®], but more detailed. His description of his own disability remained, “Learning differently” (question 2). He still did not know what an IEP was but, this time, referred to it as a, “Goal that you set”, which demonstrated his understanding that an IEP contained a goal. He still did not know what the acronym, IEP, meant. This time, when asked on the survey how an IEP helps him in his education, he stated, “You can get special help” (question 5), which was an improvement from his response on the pre IEP Survey[®] when he was unable to give a response. He still was unable to describe an accommodation or modification. When asked on the survey if there were any laws to help him in special education, this time, he did not know; this differed from his response of, “No” on the pre IEP Survey[®] (question 7). He still did not know what an accommodation or modification was, but when asked to define a self-advocate, he attempted a response this time and indicated it was, “The way you act” (question 8). He still did not know why being a self-advocate was important. He remained unsure as to whether he had attended any of his IEP meetings but this time he indicated he was comfortable attending because, “I get to set goals” (question 11). When asked on the survey what he does at his IEP meetings, he responded, “Talk about goals” (question 12).

Overall, Alex’s responses to most questions on the post IEP Survey[®] were more in depth than his responses on the pre IEP Survey[®]. However, this time, he knew that an IEP had a goal, even though he was unable to define an IEP. Also, he was able to identify the IEP as a way to receive special help; on the pre IEP Survey[®], he did not know how to respond to the question. He also made attempts to imagine his comfort level if he would attend his IEP meeting and knew that goals would be discussed at the

meeting. On the pre IEP Survey[®], he could not respond to the questions related to these topics. His combined score was 65 and 44 points higher than his first combined score.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], students in the control group earned post- scores ranging from the 16th to 45th percentile. Alex's total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 16th percentile, a decrease of fifteen percentile points from his first score, although his total score still fell in the average range. As depicted in Table 9, his individual scores on the Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization domains remained constant, while his scores on the Autonomy and Self-Regulation domains demonstrated regression.

Table 9

Alex's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	13	6
Self-Regulation	90	54
Psychological Empowerment	100	100
Self-Realization	96	96
Self-Determination Total Score	31	16

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what he shared at the meeting, Alex stated, "What I was good at. I like to work in groups. I do my homework. I like sports" (question 1a). When asked how he felt during the meeting, he indicated, "I felt proud because they had a lot to talk about and it was a lot of good stuff" (question 1b). He also indicated he was happy he had participated in his IEP

meeting; he responded, “Yes, because it helped me to get to know what my strengths and weaknesses and how to get help when I need it” (question 1c). When asked how he had prepared for the IEP meeting, he responded, “I did not do anything for the last meeting but I have done power points before in earlier grades” (question 1d). The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and queried students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Alex responded, “No. I felt good about the meeting and I wouldn't change it. I had plenty of time to ask questions” (question 2).

Fifth control group case study: Jason. At the beginning of the study, Jason, a Caucasian male, was 14 years old and later turned 15 before the study concluded. He had a learning disability and had been receiving special education services since his 6th grade school year when he moved from another school district. In his previous school district, he had been receiving special education services, but it is unclear from a review of his IEP how long he had been receiving them. According to his IEP for the 2011-12 school year, Jason demonstrated learning difficulties with reading comprehension, written expression, and mathematics. Based on results from a curriculum based assessment, Jason's reading comprehension skills were at the 5th grade level. In the area of written expression, it was noted on his IEP that Jason made numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Based on a curriculum based measurement of his written expression, Jason's skills were well below grade level. In the area of mathematics, according to a curriculum based assessment of general concepts and problem-solving, Jason's skills were at the 7th grade level. Testing accommodations necessary for his success included an alternate setting for taking tests and extended time for completion.

He also was allowed to have the text read aloud to him and he was allowed the use of a calculator or chart when testing guidelines permitted. In the classroom, he was provided a copy of notes when note-taking was lengthy or when it interfered with his ability to attend to instruction. In addition, he was allowed one extra day for completion of lengthy assignments.

Pre-tests. All students in the control group were given the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Based on the IEP Survey scoring rubric, Jason obtained a score of 10, 11, and 13, respectively, from the three IEP Survey[®] raters. His combined score was 34. His mean score was 11.3. When Jason responded to the IEP Survey[®] items, he described a disability as, "To be led or construct" (question 1) and he was unable to identify his own disability. He did not know what an IEP was or what the acronym meant. However, he did indicate that an IEP could help him in his education, "By telling the teachers we have ability in the subject" (question 5). He was unable to describe an accommodation or modification and did not know there were laws to help him in special education. Jason did not know what a self-advocate was and did not know why being a self-advocate is important. Finally, Jason accurately indicated he had attended his IEP meetings two times but was not sure if he was comfortable participating in them. When asked on the survey what he did at his IEP meetings, he responded, "Talking about our grades and progress" (question 12).

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], scores are represented in percentile ranks. Scores from the 16th – 84th percentile fall in the average range. Students in the control group earned pre-test scores that ranged from the 17th percentile to the 67th percentile. Jason obtained a Total Self-Determination score at the 67th percentile, which

falls in the average range. This score is derived from four domain scores: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-Realization. In the Autonomy domain, which assesses independence and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests, and abilities, Jason's score was at the 63rd percentile. In the Self-Regulation domain, which assesses problem-solving skills, goal setting, and task performance, Jason's score was at the 74th percentile. In the Psychological Empowerment domain, which assesses beliefs in ability, perceptions of control, and expectations of success, Jason's score was at the 59th percentile. In the Self-Realization domain, which assesses individual self-awareness and self-knowledge, Jason's score was at the 88th percentile. In summary, his individual scores on each of the domains suggested that his skills were similarly developed. Overall, his self-determination skills were in the average range when compared to other adolescents with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Lessons and journal responses. As a member of the control group, Jason did not participate in any of the self-advocacy lessons; however, he did complete the journal prompts. The first prompt asked: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future? Jason responded, "I know I have a learning disability and ADHD. I don't know if I have any other ones." He also described how it would impact him in the future by stating, "The ADHD medicine I don't like to take. The learning disabilities is why I'm in special ed. I don't know how they affect me. The ADHD doesn't affect my learning but I don't like to sit down. Something that helped me in [previous school] was a stuffed turtle with rocks that helped me sit still and learn a little bit better. In the future I might have a hard time getting the concept of the thing but I will learn one way or another."

The second journal prompt asked: What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are? Jason's response demonstrated a keen understanding of the purpose of IEP goals, but he was able to name only one of his goals; he did, however, demonstrate an accurate awareness of his accommodations. He responded, "IEP goal means you have a goal set to get out of special ed classes. I have a writing goal. I don't know what my IEP goals are except for that. An accommodation that I have is that tests are read to me. I get help with homework and get one-on-one time. I get help on state assessments by getting questions read to me and going to a separate room. I get help in science and social studies on homework. I get help in [study hall]."

The third journal prompt asked: What are three ways you want to try to become a better self-advocate this year? Jason responded, "Study more frequently instead of waiting the night before, continue asking for help when I need it, and need help getting the notes written down." The final journal prompt asked students to respond to a scenario in which they experienced difficulty reading their tests and assignments, which were too long and hard. Jason responded, "Ask teacher for help and tell them it's too hard. Tell your parents." After completing responses to the final journal prompt, students in the control group were not provided with any tools to help them prepare for the IEP meeting.

IEP meeting participation. At his transition IEP meeting at the high school, Jason's participation was observed and rated by three members of his IEP team including the researcher, his prospective case manager for high school, and the school psychologist at the high school. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was used to rate his degree of participation at the meeting. Students in the control group earned scores that ranged from 6 to 14 points. Behaviors included introducing himself and IEP team members; stating

the purpose of the meeting; reviewing his IEP goals and progress; asking for feedback from team members; stating needed support; expressing his interests, skills, and limits; expressing his goals for the future; and closing the meeting by thanking everyone.

According to ratings from the observers, only two of the observers noted that Jason introduced himself at the meeting. The other observer did not observe Jason to have done so. All three observers agreed that Jason did not introduce IEP team members, did not state the purpose of the meeting, did not review his IEP goals and his progress, and did not ask for feedback. However, there was disagreement with regard to his stating needed supports, as one observer did not observe him doing so and assigned zero points. The other two observers noted that he had done so with a prompt or cue from an adult and assigned one point each. With regard to expressing his interests, all three observers agreed that he demonstrated this behavior. However, two of the observers noted that he required a prompt or cue to do so and assigned him one point, whereas the other observer noted that he did so independently and assigned him two points. With regard to expressing his skills and limits, there was disagreement among the observers, as two of them noted that Jason did so with a prompt or cue from an adult, while the other observer noted that Jason did not demonstrate this behavior at all. There was total agreement, however, on whether Jason expressed his goals for the future and noted that he demonstrated this behavior with a prompt or cue. There was disagreement among the observers as to whether Jason had closed the meeting by thanking everyone. Two observers noted that he failed to do so and the other observer noted that he had done so with a prompt or cue from an adult. His scores on the rubric were added together from the three observers for a total score of 14 out of 60 possible points.

Post-tests. After intervention group students had participated in the final lesson, students in both groups completed the IEP Survey[©] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] again to determine growth. On the IEP Survey[©], Jason earned scores of 26, 24, and 28, respectively, from the three raters. His combined score was 78. His mean score was 26. This time, he described a disability as “a problem of one or more people” (question 1), which was more detailed than his response on the pre IEP Survey[©]. His description of his disability, this time, was also more detailed and accurate. He described it as, “ADHD and learning” (question 2). He still could not accurately describe what an IEP was or what the acronym meant, but this time, attempted to describe an IEP. He responded, “I really think that it is you leave for your work” (question 3), which referred to the fact that he was allowed to leave the classroom after instruction for specialized, small group instruction in the special education classroom. When asked on the survey how an IEP helps him in his education, his response was similar to his original response, although this time, he referred to one of his accommodations. He indicated the IEP helps “By shortening the work” (question 5). When asked on the survey to define an accommodation or modification, this time he described a modification was “to change things” (question 6), which demonstrated more accuracy than his original response in which he was unable to give a response. His responses to the next questions about special education laws and self-advocacy indicated that he still did not know there were laws to help him in special education, did not know what a self-advocate was, and did not know why being a self-advocate is important. His response regarding the number of times he has been to his IEP meetings was unchanged from his original response, but still accurate. When asked about his comfort level with participating in his IEP meetings, this

time, he indicated that he was comfortable because he had an opportunity “to hear how well I’m doing” (question 11), which was in contrast to his response on the pre IEP Survey[©] when he was not able to determine his level of comfort. When asked on the survey what he did at his IEP meetings, he responded, “Sit and listen” (question 12).

Overall, Jason’s responses to most questions were more in depth than his responses on the pre IEP Survey[©]. However, this time, he was able to identify more accurately his own disability, albeit he did not provide the formal definition of learning disability. He also was able to conceptualize more fully what an IEP was. For example, on the pre IEP Survey[©], he did not know how to describe an IEP. This time, however, he was able to define it by one of its functions of allowing him to leave the classroom to work in the special education classroom. In addition, he could describe that a modification changes something when asked on the post IEP Survey[©], when he was unable to describe it with certainty on the pre IEP Survey[©]. His combined score was 78 and 44 points higher than his first combined score.

On The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale[©], students in the control group earned post- test scores ranging from the 16th to 45th percentile. Jason’s total Self-Determination post-test score was at the 45th percentile, a decrease of twenty-two percentile points from his first score. As depicted in Table 10, his individual scores on the Autonomy, Self-Regulation, and Self-Realization domains suggested regression, while his score on the Psychological Empowerment domain suggested growth.

Table 10

Jason's Arc's Self Determination Percentile Scores

Domain	Pre-test Percentile Score	Post-test Percentile Score
Autonomy	63	43
Self-Regulation	74	60
Psychological Empowerment	59	79
Self-Realization	88	73
Self-Determination Total Score	67	45

IEP meeting reflection. After students had attended their transition IEP meetings, they were asked to complete the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey, in which students were asked to describe their IEP meeting experience. When asked about what he shared at the meeting, Jason stated, “That I like to cook, like band, like running. I want to get a job. I also told them what I do to get good grades and what college I want to go to” (question 1a). When asked how he felt during the meeting, he responded, “I was excited” (question 1b) and that he was glad he had participated because, “I got to meet the counselor and was able to share stuff about myself” (question 1c). When asked how he had prepared for the IEP meeting, he indicated he had not done anything to prepare for the meeting. The IEP Meeting Reflection Survey also allowed students to reflect on their degree of participation at the IEP meeting and asked students whether they thought they could have done more during their IEP meeting. Jason responded, “No. I didn't have any other questions or anything I wanted to say” (question 2).

The discussion thus far in this chapter has provided a data story for each student participant. Data were presented in a structured format for each student in the intervention group followed by a structured format for each student in the control group.

The following section provides a comparison of the two groups for similarities, differences, and emergent themes in relation to the information presented in the data stories.

Cross-Case Results

This section begins with a comparison of data between and within the two groups to identify commonalities and differences among students. First, the information is organized by the four components of self-advocacy identified by Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005). As described in chapter one, those components are (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) communication, and (d) leadership. This presentation format was chosen by the researcher because the four components of self-advocacy were anticipated categories through which themes would emerge. Results are then discussed in relation to each of the four research questions.

Knowledge of self. One of the components of self-advocacy is knowledge of self, which includes an awareness of personal strengths, preferences, goals, dreams, interests, learning style, needed supports, accommodations needs, and knowledge of one's disability (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005). For the present study, data were collected to ascertain students' knowledge of their own disability, their accommodations, their goals for the future, and their interests. Following is a discussion of results and emergent themes related to knowledge of self.

Knowledge of personal disability. As depicted in Table 11, a majority of the students demonstrated no knowledge of their own disability, based on their responses on the pre IEP Survey[©]. This categorical description included responses in which students were uncertain about their disabilities or denied having a disability. Partial knowledge

was indicated when the students could not identify their own disability label but could identify at least one area impacted by the disability. The categorical description of knowledge was assigned when students could name their disability label or could name all areas impacted by their disabilities. One week after the IEP Survey[®] pre-test when students were given the first journal prompt, a majority of the students demonstrated increased awareness. When asked about their own disabilities, three students assigned it a negative connotation, even if they could not define it. One of the three students, however, demonstrated a hopeful outlook in spite of a negative perception. Tracy stated, “I think my disability is either seizures or ADHD and I feel sad that I have those things but I have hope it will go away” (journal prompt 1). The remaining majority of the students demonstrated an acceptance of their disabilities and two of them interjected a hopeful outlook. Allie stated, “Well, it might be hard sometimes but the one thing I know is I'm going to read when I am 15 or 16” (journal prompt 1). Alex stated, “I think I have a learning disability and I feel strong that I can deal with it. Right now, I can deal with it but maybe in the future I won't have a disability” (journal prompt 1).

Table 11

Themes for Knowledge of Personal Disability

Student	Group	Pre IEP Survey	Journal Prompt 1	Post IEP Survey	Connotation	Outlook
Jack	I	no knowledge	no knowledge	knowledge	Negative	-
Charlotte	I	no knowledge	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	Negative	-
Tracy	I	no knowledge	knowledge	-	Negative	Hopeful
Allie	I	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	Acceptance	Hopeful
Nathan	I	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	knowledge	Acceptance	-
Lori	C	knowledge	knowledge	knowledge	Acceptance	-
Liz	C	no knowledge	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	Acceptance	-
Landon	C	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	partial knowledge	Acceptance	-
Alex	C	no knowledge	knowledge	no knowledge	Acceptance	Hopeful
Jason	C	no knowledge	knowledge	knowledge	Acceptance	-

Note. I = Intervention; C = Control; - indicates data unavailable.

Knowledge of accommodation needs. Students were asked about their knowledge of accommodations or modifications on the IEP Survey[©] and were asked if they knew what their IEP goals and accommodations were on the second journal prompt. As depicted in Table 12, half of the students demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding the definition of an accommodation or modification, and half the students demonstrated limited conceptual knowledge of accommodations or modifications. Question 6 on the IEP Survey[©] required students to define an accommodation or modification. All students were unable to do so. On the second journal prompt, students responded to a question

about their own IEP goals and accommodations. Half of the students demonstrated partial knowledge, which meant they were able to identify at least one of their accommodation needs. One student demonstrated complete knowledge of his own accommodations as documented in his IEP. The overall knowledge level is depicted in the final column on Table 12, and was categorized as a lack of knowledge when the student was unable to demonstrate knowledge of accommodation needs on the IEP Survey[®] pre-test, the journal prompt, and the IEP Survey[®] post-test. A limited knowledge level was indicated when the student demonstrated at least partial knowledge on at least one of the measures.

Table 12

Themes for Knowledge of Accommodation Needs

Student	Group	Pre IEP Survey	Journal Prompt 2	Post IEP Survey	Knowledge Level
Jack	I	None	None	None	Lack
Nathan	I	None	None	Partial	Limited
Charlotte	I	None	Partial	None	Limited
Shelby	I	None	None	None	Lack
Allie	I	None	None	None	Lack
Tracy	I	None	None	-	Lack
Lori	C	None	Partial	None	Limited
Liz	C	None	Partial	None	Limited
Landon	C	None	None	None	Lack
Alex	C	None	Partial	None	Limited
Jason	C	None	Complete	None	Limited

Note: I = Intervention; C = Control; - = student did not complete the post IEP Survey.

Interests and future goals. Subcomponents of knowledge of self include an awareness of interests and an establishment of goals for the future. Students in the present study were observed at their transition IEP meeting to determine whether they expressed their goals for the future and their interests. Students in the intervention group obtained higher mean scores on expressing interests and expressing goals for the future. As depicted in Table 19 in a subsequent section of this chapter, the intervention group mean score for expressing interests was 5.0, and the control group mean score was 3.0.

With regard to expressing goals for the future, the intervention group mean score was 5.7, and the control group mean score was 2.0. Students in the intervention group outperformed students in the control group on both measures.

Knowledge of self has been discussed with regard to students' knowledge of personal disabilities and knowledge of accommodation needs. In addition, subcomponents of knowledge of self include students' interests and goals for the future. The following information will provide a description of the present data regarding students' knowledge of rights.

Knowledge of rights. Subcomponents of knowledge of rights is an awareness of personal rights, community rights, human service rights, consumer rights, educational rights, steps to redress violations, steps to advocate for change, and knowledge of resources (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005). For the present study, data were analyzed regarding students' knowledge of special education laws afforded them as a student with a disability.

On the IEP Survey[®], students were asked if there were any laws to help them in special education. Students in the intervention group had the opportunity to participate in a lesson in which a brief portion was devoted to discussing two laws, IDEA and ADA, which provided protection to individuals with disabilities. Students in the control group did not participate in this lesson. As depicted in Table 13, the majority of all students did not demonstrate knowledge of their rights as a student with a disability; they were either uncertain if there were laws to help them or they denied that laws existed to help them. The knowledge level, as indicated on the final column of Table 13, was categorized as partial if the student did not consistently acknowledge the existence of laws on both the

pre-test and post-test. The knowledge level was categorized as specific if the student demonstrated certainty on both the pre-test and post-test that laws existed to help them in special education. Only one student in the intervention group, Nathan, demonstrated partial knowledge; two students in the control group, Liz and Landon, demonstrated partial and specific knowledge, respectively.

Table 13

Themes for Knowledge of Rights. Are There Laws To Help You In Special Education?

Student	Group	Pre IEP Survey	Post IEP Survey	Knowledge Level
Jack	I	Uncertain	Uncertain	None
Nathan	I	Uncertain	Acknowledged	Partial
Charlotte	I	Uncertain	Denied	None
Shelby	I	Uncertain	Denied	None
Allie	I	Uncertain	Denied	None
Lori	C	Uncertain	Uncertain	None
Liz	C	Acknowledged	Uncertain	Partial
Landon	C	Certain	Certain	Specific
Alex	C	Uncertain	Uncertain	None
Jason	C	Uncertain	Uncertain	None

Note: I = Intervention; C = Control.

Results related to knowledge of rights have been presented with regard to students' knowledge of special education laws. The following information provides a description of data related communication, another component of self-advocacy.

Communication. Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005) described communication as one of the four components of self-advocacy and posited that learning how to communicate with others in different settings is vital to self-advocacy. Included in communication is the ability to convey knowledge of self and personal rights to others. For the present study, communication is demonstrated by a student's understanding of the concept of self-advocacy, knowledge of the importance of self-advocacy, and the ability to identify ways to implement self-advocacy. These data were analyzed from student responses on the IEP Survey[®] and the third journal prompt. Data regarding communication of necessary supports were analyzed from the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. As depicted in Table 14, none of the students understood the concept of a self-advocate when asked on the pre IEP Survey[®]; only two students demonstrated partial understanding of the concept of self-advocacy when asked on the post IEP Survey[®]. Partial knowledge was indicated when a student's response demonstrated the understanding that self-advocacy required an act on the part of the student, even if the answer was vague. Regarding the importance of self-advocacy, only one student demonstrated partial knowledge when asked on the pre IEP Survey[®], which meant that the student's response contained at least one reason that self-advocacy was important. When students were asked later on the post IEP Survey[®], five of the students were able to demonstrate partial knowledge. For example, Nathan's response, "So I can succeed in life," indicated at least one reason self-advocacy was important. Charlotte's response, "To be able to stand up for yourself," and Landon's response, "Depending on yourself," indicated knowledge that self-advocacy required a personal act. Two of the students gave

descriptive responses, which fell under the theme of obtaining help. For example, Jack and Lori indicated that self-advocacy was important because they needed help.

With regard to implementation of their self-advocacy skills, students were asked on the third journal prompt to describe three ways they could be a better self-advocate during that school year. All students gave responses that fell under the theme of doing something to obtain help, improving skills to address areas of weakness, or both. Table 14 depicts application of self-advocacy skills in the IEP meeting, which was assessed by whether students had stated needed supports. It was noted to be observed if at least one observer noted the student had engaged in the behavior whether independently or with prompts. All students in the intervention group who attended their IEP meeting were noted to have communicated their needed supports by at least one observer. Half of the students in the control group who attended their IEP meeting were noted to have communicated their needed supports by at least one observer.

Table 14

Themes for Self-Advocacy Knowledge

Intervention Group						
Student	Concept		Importance		Implementation Ideas	Demonstration
	Pre IEP Survey	Post IEP Survey	Pre IEP Survey	Post IEP Survey		
Jack	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Obtain Help	-	Observed
Nathan	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Partial	Behavioral Improvement	-
Charlotte	Uncertain	Partial	Uncertain	Partial	Obtain Help	Observed
Shelby	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Obtain Help	Observed
Allie	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Obtain Help	-
Tracy	Uncertain	-	Uncertain	-	-	-
Control Group						
Student	Concept		Importance		Implementation Ideas	Demonstration
	Pre IEP Survey	Post IEP Survey	Pre IEP Survey	Post IEP Survey		
Lori	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Obtain Help	Obtain Help	Not Observed
Liz	Uncertain	Partial	Uncertain	Uncertain	Obtain Help	Not Observed
Landon	Uncertain	Uncertain	Partial	Partial	Behavioral Improvement, Obtain Help	-
Alex	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Behavioral Improvement, Obtain Help	Observed
Jason	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Behavioral Improvement, Obtain Help	Observed

Note. – indicates data unavailable.

This section has provided a description of results regarding the communication component of self-advocacy. Self-advocacy knowledge was discussed in terms of how students demonstrated conceptual knowledge of self-advocacy and its importance; ideas for implementing self-advocacy; and whether they demonstrated self-advocacy in their

IEP meetings. The next section provides a discussion of data related to leadership, the last of the four components of self-advocacy.

Leadership. “Leadership involves learning the roles and dynamics of a group and the skill to function in a group” (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). In the present study, leadership was demonstrated in the students’ IEP meeting participation. Data from the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric and the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey were analyzed for similarities, differences, and emergent themes. Students were observed at their transition IEP meetings and behaviors related to the nature of their participation were rated using the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. After the meeting, students completed the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey. As depicted in Table 15, students in the intervention group indicated they had shared what was on their Power Point template, without recalling details of the information shared at the meeting. The control group, however, recalled specific details regarding the information they shared at the meeting such as, goals, interests, and strengths. Only one student in the control group indicated she had not shared anything at her IEP meeting. With regard to students’ feelings during the IEP meeting, the majority of students denoted a positive feeling. Shelby indicated she was nervous during her meeting and Lori indicated she felt neither positive nor negative. When asked on the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey about how they felt about participating in their IEP meetings, all but one student denoted a positive feeling about their participation. Charlotte responded, “I felt good like I got a chance to feel what I’m going to be doing”; Alex stated, “I felt proud because they had a lot to talk about and it was a lot of good stuff”; and Jason responded, “I was excited.”

Regarding students' manner of preparation for their IEP meetings, all students in the intervention group who had attended their transition IEP meetings indicated they had used the Power Point template, which they had designed to reflect their individual information. All students in the control group indicated they had done nothing to prepare for their meetings. When asked on the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey about ways they could have improved upon their degree of participation, two of the three students in the intervention group who had participated in their IEP meetings indicated they could have either talked or asked more questions. Only one student in the control group indicated she would have talked more to improve her participation. The other three students in the control group indicated they would not have done things differently.

Overall, students in the intervention group received higher total scores on the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric than students in the control group. In addition, the higher scores for two of the three students in the intervention group were associated with an awareness of opportunity to improve upon their IEP meeting participatory behaviors. Students with lower scores, however, recalled specific details about information they shared at their IEP meeting; students with higher scores indicated they used the provided template.

Table 15

Themes for IEP Meeting Leadership

Student	Intervention				Control		
	Jack	Charlotte	Shelby	Lori	Liz	Alex	Jason
IEP Meeting Observation Rubric Score	44	28	50	11	6	7	14
Information Shared	Template, Questions	Template	Template	Goals, Interests	Nothing	Strengths, Interests	Strengths, Interests, Goals
Feelings During Meeting	Positive	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Positive	Positive
Feelings About Participation	Positive	Positive	Neutral	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Manner of Preparation	Template	Template	Template	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing
Participation Improvement	Talk	Questions	None	Talk	None	None	None

This section provided results related to the leadership component of self-advocacy. Specifically, the information presented was related to leadership behaviors demonstrated in students' IEP meetings and their feelings and perceptions about the nature of their participation. Data were examined for commonalities, differences, and emergent themes. The next section of this chapter presents results as answers to each of the four research questions.

Research question 1. How much growth occurred between pre-intervention measures and post-intervention measures of self-advocacy, using The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] and the IEP Survey[®], among students who received explicit self-advocacy instruction? Students in the intervention group completed The Arc's Self-

Determination Scale[®] and the IEP Survey[®] before receiving self-advocacy instructional lessons and after the lessons to determine growth. Table 16 presents the pre-test score, the post-test score, and the growth from pre-test to post-test on both of the instruments.

On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], students in the intervention group demonstrated an increase of 67 percentile points as a whole. However, only four of the five students in the group demonstrated actual growth; the other two students' scores reflected a decrease in points from pre-test to post-test.

On the IEP Survey[®], students in the intervention group demonstrated growth from pre-test to post-test, as evidenced by their increase of 112 points overall. However, only three of the five students who took both the pre-test and post-test demonstrated growth; the other two students demonstrated a decrease in points from their pre-test score to their post-test score. Shelby often exhibited a negative attitude when asked to complete surveys, and Allie had a tendency to be easily influenced by others. These factors could have contributed to their low scores on the IEP Survey[®] post-test. On the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], Shelby's post-test score was also lower than her pre-test score; Allie's post-test score was higher than her pre-test score. It was noted that Shelby completed the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] during the same session when she completed the IEP Survey[®]. In contrast, it was noted that Allie was unable to complete the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] during the same session and finished it with her special education case manager the next day. These factors might explain the inconsistencies between Shelby's and Allie's scores.

Table 16

Intervention Group Growth Scores on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale and the IEP Survey by Student

Student	Self-determination Score			IEP Survey Score		
	Pre	Post	Growth	Pre	Post	Growth
Jack	53	73	20	42	56	14
Nathan	19	50	31	63	111	48
Charlotte	96	99	3	50	111	61
Shelby	73	45	-28	67	60	-7
Allie	50	91	41	45	41	-4
Total			67			112

Note. Self-determination scores are percentiles.

Research question 2. To what extent are the differences in growth scores (post-test minus pre-test), as measured by the IEP Survey[®], affected by group status (i.e. students who received self-advocacy instruction and students who did not)? As illustrated in Table 17, students in the intervention group, exhibited growth scores that ranged from -7 to 61. As a whole, the intervention group demonstrated a growth of 112 points from pre-IEP Survey[®] score to post-IEP Survey[®] score. Students in the control group, who had not received self-advocacy instruction, exhibited growth scores that ranged from -6 to 44. As a whole, the control group demonstrated a growth of 115 points from pre-IEP Survey[®] score to post-IEP Survey[®] score.

Two of the five students' scores in the intervention group, Charlotte and Nathan, exhibited the greatest growth among their group peers. Two other students in the intervention group, Shelby and Allie, exhibited negative growth scores of -7 and -4,

respectively, which were small compared to the number of positive scores in the group. Only one student in the control group, Landon, displayed a negative growth score of -6. However, his pre-test score of 102 was the highest among students in both groups. His post-test score of 96 was the highest in the control group and close to the two highest scores of 111 in the intervention group.

Table 17

IEP Survey Growth Scores By Group

Student	Intervention		
	Pre	Post	Growth
Jack	42	56	14
Nathan	63	111	48
Charlotte	50	111	61
Shelby	67	60	-7
Allie	45	41	-4
Total			112
Student	Control		
	Pre	Post	Growth
Lori	60	70	10
Liz	67	90	23
Landon	102	96	-6
Alex	21	65	44
Jason	34	78	44
Total			115

Research question 3. To what extent are the differences in growth scores (post-test minus pre-test), as measured by The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], affected by group status (i.e. students who received self-advocacy instruction and students who did

not)? Table 18 shows that, as a whole, students in the intervention group demonstrated a growth of 67 percentile points from pre-test score to post-test score. Students in the control group, who had not received self-advocacy instruction, demonstrated a decrease of 23 percentile points from pre-test score to post-test score. One of the five students in the intervention group displayed a negative growth score, while two students in the control group displayed a negative growth score. There was a difference in growth scores between the two groups of 90 percentile points.

Table 18

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Percentile Scores by Group

Student	Intervention		
	Pre	Post	Growth
Jack	53	73	20
Nathan	19	50	31
Charlotte	96	99	3
Shelby	73	45	-28
Allie	50	91	41
Total			67
Student	Control		
	Pre	Post	Growth
Lori	18	22	4
Liz	17	26	9
Landon	21	22	1
Alex	31	16	-15
Jason	67	45	-22
Total			-23

Research question 4. What differences exist in the degree of IEP meeting participation, as measured by the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric, between students who received self-advocacy instruction and those who did not? Students were observed at the transition IEP meeting by three members of the IEP team to determine the students' degree of participation. Table 19 outlines the ten behaviors by which students were evaluated. Zero points were assigned when the student did not demonstrate the behavior; one point was assigned when the student was able to demonstrate the behavior with a prompt or cue from an adult; and two points were assigned when the student demonstrated the behavior independently. Scores from each of the observers were combined for a total score for each student on the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric, for which 60 total points were possible. As a group, the total possible score depended on the number of students in the group. For example, the intervention group contained three students so the maximum possible group score on the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was 180 points. The control group consisted of four students so the maximum possible score on the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric as 240 points.

As a whole, the intervention group performed better, as evidenced by their mean score of 40.6 points on the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. Students in the control group, who had not received self-advocacy instruction, earned a mean score of 9.5 points on the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. As depicted in Table 19, students in the intervention group performed better on each of the IEP meeting participatory behaviors than students in the control group did. On each of the behaviors, students were able to earn a maximum rating of 2 points, which meant the student exhibited the behavior independently. A maximum total score of 6 points was possible because the ratings were

combined from three observers. Students in the intervention group earned mean scores that ranged from 2.8 to 5.0; the most frequently obtained score on individual behaviors was 6.0. Students in the control group earned mean scores that ranged from 0.6 to 1.4; the most frequently obtained score on individual behaviors was 0.

Table 19

Individual and Group Scores On The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric

Student	Intervention				Control				
	Jack	Charlotte	Shelby	Mean	Lori	Liz	Alex	Jason	Mean
Introduced Self	5	4	5	4.7	0	0	0	2	.50
Introduced Team Members	4	4	5	4.3	0	0	0	0	0
Stated Purpose of Meeting	2	1	6	3	0	0	0	0	0
Reviewed IEP Goals and Progress	6	3	6	5	0	0	0	0	0
Asked for Feedback	6	3	6	5	1	0	0	0	.25
Stated Needed Support	6	3	6	5	0	0	1	2	.75
Expressed Interests	6	3	6	5	5	0	3	4	3
Expressed Skills and Limits	0	2	4	2	2	0	1	2	1.3
Expressed Goals for Future	6	5	6	5.7	3	0	2	3	2
Closed Meeting	3	0	0	1	0	6	0	1	1.8
Mean	4.4	2.8	5	4.1	1.1	0.6	0.7	1.4	.96

Summary

This chapter began with an examination of qualitative and quantitative data. First, within-case results were discussed in the form of data stories for each student. Next, cross-case results were reported in which data stories were compared for similarities, differences, and emergent themes, organized by four components of self-advocacy. Then, data were presented in answers to the four research questions.

Results related to the research questions revealed that students in the intervention group as a whole demonstrated growth in self-determination skills, as evidenced by a growth of 67 percentile points from pre-test to post-test; students in the control group demonstrated a negative growth score, as evidenced by their decrease of 23 points. In addition, results revealed that students in the intervention group demonstrated an increase of knowledge regarding the IEP, accommodations, self-advocacy, and IEP meeting participation, as evidenced by an increase of 112 points as a group from pre-test to post-test on the IEP Survey[®]. However, students in the control group demonstrated more growth on the IEP Survey[®] than did the students in the intervention group, as evidenced by their growth score of 115 points.

Results related to IEP meeting participation indicated that students in the intervention group demonstrated a higher degree of leadership and participatory behaviors than did the students in the control group. Students who engaged in more participatory behaviors in the IEP meeting did not recall details of the information they shared at their IEP meetings. This was in sharp contrast to students who engaged in fewer participatory behaviors at their IEP meetings, who were able to recall specific information they shared.

Results related to students' knowledge of self were described in terms of subcomponents including knowledge of personal disabilities, knowledge of accommodation needs, awareness of interests, and establishment of future goals. With regard to knowledge of personal disabilities, the majority of students accepted their disability, even if they had limited knowledge of it, and some students demonstrated a hopeful outlook in spite of their disability. The vast majority of students demonstrated a lack of knowledge or limited conceptual knowledge of their accommodation needs.

Results related to knowledge of rights were discussed in terms of students' knowledge of special education laws. When students were queried as to whether there were any laws to help them in special education, the majority of students demonstrated no knowledge. Two students were an exception to this and demonstrated either partial or specific knowledge of special education laws.

Results related to communication were discussed in terms of students' self-advocacy knowledge. The majority of students did not know what a self-advocate was, but half the students demonstrated at least partial knowledge of the importance of self-advocacy. The majority of students realized that self-advocacy is a form of obtaining help. When observed in their IEP meetings, the majority of students communicated their support needs.

Results related to leadership indicated that the majority of students reported a positive feeling during their IEP meetings and reported positive feelings about having participated in general. Students who had used a furnished template to aid in their IEP meeting participation achieved higher scores for participatory behaviors but recognized a need for improvement. Students with lower scores for participatory behaviors did not

have access to a template but were able to recall more details about what they had shared at their IEP meetings.

Chapter five presents interpretations of the findings and recommendations. The chapter begins with a summary of the study including the overview of the problem; the purpose statement and research questions; the review of the methodology; and the major findings of the study. Next, findings related to the literature presented in chapter two are discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes with implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

In the previous chapter, results of the analyses of data were presented. Chapter five is comprised of a summary of the study to recapitulate the overview of the problem, the purpose and research questions, the methodology, and the major findings. The next section provides an overview of the results related to the literature, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. The purpose of the section is to elaborate on the variables that were examined in the present study to provide deeper insight of the potential impact on special education practices. The section also provides suggestions for future research aimed at educating students with disabilities in self-advocacy. Finally, concluding remarks are offered to synthesize the essence of this research.

Study Summary

This chapter begins with a summary of the purpose and organization of the present study and continues with the major findings related to the scholarly literature outlined in chapter two. The purpose of the present study was to emphasize the importance of instruction with students with disabilities to improve their self-advocacy skills, their self-determination, and their IEP meeting participation by analyzing qualitative and quantitative data. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] was used to measure students' self-determination skills. The IEP Survey[®] and journal prompts were used to assess students' knowledge associated with the four components of self-advocacy. The IEP Meeting Observation Rubric was utilized to measure students' degree

of IEP meeting participation, and the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey was utilized to assess students' feelings and perceptions regarding their IEP meeting participation.

Students were assigned to either an intervention group or control group. The intervention group received self-advocacy instruction in four weekly lessons; the control group did not receive instruction. All students completed the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] as pre-test and post-test measures. In addition, all students responded to four weekly journal prompts associated with topics discussed in the four weekly lessons.

The study included 11 students with IEPs enrolled in the 8th grade (6 students in the intervention group and 5 students in the control group) in a suburban public school district in the Midwest. Four research questions guided the study in determining (a) whether students who received self-advocacy instruction demonstrated growth on the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], (b) whether self-advocacy instruction impacted students' growth on the IEP Survey[®], (c) whether self-advocacy instruction impacted students' growth on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], and (d) whether self-advocacy instruction influenced students' IEP meeting participation.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to answer all four research questions. Questions one, two, and three were answered using the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Question four was answered using the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric and the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey. In order to incorporate more qualitative data, additional findings from emergent themes were reported in relation to the four components of self-advocacy. The following section provides an overview of the problem that inspired the present study.

Overview of the problem. Federal and state law mandates that educators invite students to their IEP meetings by age 14, yet most students have not been provided the opportunity to acquire necessary skills to participate meaningfully. Researchers have discovered that students' participation in their IEP meetings is limited or passive in nature (Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al., 2006), which may be attributed to their lack of experiences with IEP meetings or their lack of self-advocacy skills (Izzo & Lamb, 2003; Van Dycke et al., 2006; Phillips, 1990). Often, students do not understand their own disabilities well enough to advocate for their needs, and their IEPs are seldom developed with sufficient student input (Izzo & Lamb, 2003; Van Dycke et al., 2006).

Researchers have recognized that explicit instruction is necessary for students to acquire the skills needed to advocate for themselves and to participate meaningfully at their IEP meetings (Arndt et al., 2006; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Grigal et al., 2003; Hammer, 2004; Izzo et al., 2001; Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen et al., 2006; Martin, Van Dycke, Green et al., 2006; Mason et al., 2004; Meglemre, 2010; Staab, 2010; Test et al., 2004; Test & Neale, 2004; Van Dycke et al., 2006; Wehmeyer et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2004). Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes (2000) surveyed 1,219 educators who provided instruction to secondary students with disabilities across the country. Ninety percent of the educators believed that instruction in components of self-determination skills was at least moderately important for their students but identified barriers to implementation, including limited training and limited time to provide instruction (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000). The following information highlights the purpose of the present study and revisits the research questions.

Purpose statement and research questions. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of explicit self-advocacy instruction on 8th grade students' knowledge of their own disabilities and accommodations. Further, this researcher investigated how the self-advocacy instruction affected the students' level of self-determination skills and the nature and degree of their IEP meeting participation. These data were compared within and across the two groups of students, which consisted of an intervention group of students who had received the self-advocacy instruction and a control group of students who did not receive self-advocacy instruction. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to determine the amount of growth that occurred on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] and the IEP Survey[®] among students who received self-advocacy instruction. Data were also analyzed to determine the extent of differences in growth between students in the intervention group and students in the control group on the IEP Survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Also, data were analyzed to determine if self-advocacy instruction affected students' degree of IEP meeting participation. The following section provides a review of the methodology employed in the present study to answer each of the research questions.

Review of the methodology. The present study was a multiple case study of 11 8th grade students with disabilities. Six students made up the intervention group, who received self-advocacy instruction, and five students made up the control group. This researcher employed a concurrent embedded mixed methods research design, which allowed the researcher to gain broader perspectives from different types of data rather than through utilizing a sole approach.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] was used to measure students' level of self-determination. The IEP Survey[®] was used to measure students' knowledge of the IEP, knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, and IEP meeting experience. At the same time, open-ended journal entries assessed students' knowledge of their disabilities and learning needs and served as both quantitative and qualitative measures. In addition, observation rubrics measured students' degree of involvement in the IEP meeting and the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey measured students' perception of their IEP meeting involvement.

Sessions occurred one time per week for six weeks during a 30-minute non-instructional block. Session one began with pre-testing measures for both groups. During session two, only students in the intervention group began receiving explicit instruction in self-advocacy. Brief journal prompts, which corresponded to topics discussed in each lesson, were administered to both the intervention group and control group weekly after the corresponding lesson had been delivered. The prompts included one or two open-ended questions designed to assess knowledge and perceptions of IEPs, IEP meetings, disabilities, or self-determination skills. Lessons were taught during four consecutive sessions.

During the final lesson, students in the intervention group were introduced to an IEP meeting script and a Power Point template to use for leading their upcoming transition IEP meeting at the high school. The following week, both groups completed the IEP survey[®] and The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] again to measure growth. Both groups of students were observed at their transition IEP meetings by three IEP team members to determine students' degree of IEP meeting involvement and the ability to

demonstrate self-advocacy behaviors. The three IEP team members utilized the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric to rate and to quantify observed behaviors. Following the transition IEP meetings, students in both groups completed the IEP Meeting Reflection Survey to assess their perceptions of IEPs, self-advocacy, and disabilities.

A data story was written for each student to organize and describe individual quantitative and qualitative data into a cohesive format. A summary of the findings was constructed using matrices to describe comparisons of data across groups and themes that emerged. Themes and scores were also compared to the research questions and literature related to self-determination or self-advocacy and IEP meeting participation, knowledge of disabilities, and knowledge of rights. The following information provides a discussion and summary of the major findings related to each of the research questions.

Major findings. The present study has included an overview of existing research related to how explicit instruction in self-advocacy has been shown to have a positive impact on students with disabilities. In addition, the present study has provided an overview of research demonstrating how the students' acquired knowledge and skills have affected their participation in IEP meetings. This section presents each of the four research questions by which the present research was guided. An explanation of major findings follows each of the research questions. Findings related to the components of self-advocacy are also discussed.

First, this researcher sought to determine how much growth would occur from pre-intervention measures to post-intervention measures of self-advocacy and self-determination, using The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] and the IEP Survey[®], among students who received explicit self-advocacy instruction. Students completed The Arc's

Self-Determination Scale[®] and the IEP Survey[®] before receiving self-advocacy instructional lessons and after the lessons to determine growth. On The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], students in the intervention group demonstrated an increase of 67 percentile points as a whole. However, only four of the five students in the group demonstrated actual growth; Jack, Nathan, Charlotte, and Allie demonstrated an increase in their Arc's Self-Determination scores of 20, 31, 3, and 41 percentile points, respectively. Shelby was the only student in the intervention group who did not demonstrate growth on her self-determination score. Her pre-test score was in the 73rd percentile and her post-test score was in the 45th percentile, albeit still in the average range.

On the IEP Survey[®], students in the intervention group demonstrated growth from pre-test to post-test, as evidenced by their increase of 112 points overall. However, only three of the five students who took both the pre-test and post-test demonstrated actual growth; the other two students demonstrated a decrease in points from their pre-test score to their post-test score. Jack, Nathan, and Charlotte demonstrated an increase in their IEP Survey[®] scores of 14, 48, and 61 points, respectively. Shelby and Allie demonstrated a decrease in their IEP Survey[®] scores of 7 and 4 points, respectively. Overall, intervention group students, as a whole, demonstrated growth on measures of self-advocacy and self-determination.

Second, this researcher sought to determine if students who received self-advocacy instruction would demonstrate a greater increase of knowledge on the IEP Survey[®] from pre-test to post-test than students who did not receive instruction. As previously mentioned, students in the intervention group who had received self-advocacy

instruction demonstrated growth on the IEP Survey[®], as evidenced by an increase of 112 points from pre-test to post-test. Also, only three of the five students in the intervention group demonstrated actual growth; the other two students demonstrated a negative growth score. Students in the control group, however, who did not receive self-advocacy instruction demonstrated more growth as a group, as evidenced by an increase of 115 points from pre-test to post-test. Only one student in the control group, Landon, demonstrated a negative growth score, albeit his pre-test score of 102 and his post-test score of 96 were the highest among his cohorts. Overall, growth scores on the IEP Survey[®] were not affected by group status. However, when comparisons were made within each group and compared across groups, the control group gained three more points on the IEP Survey[®] than the intervention group. Also, fewer students in the group experienced negative growth scores than did students in the intervention group.

Third, this researcher sought to determine if students who received self-advocacy instruction would demonstrate a greater increase in self-determination skills than students who did not receive instruction, as measured by their pre-test and post-test scores on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. Students in the intervention group who had received self-advocacy instruction demonstrated an increase of 67 percentile points from pre-test to post-test. Students in the control group who had not received self-advocacy instruction demonstrated a negative growth score of 23. One student in the intervention group demonstrated a negative growth score of 28, while two students in the control group received a negative growth score of 15 and 22, respectively. Overall, growth scores on the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] were affected by group status, as students in the

intervention group demonstrated more growth individually and as a group than did students in the control group.

Fourth, this researcher sought to determine whether self-advocacy instruction would impact students' degree of IEP meeting participation. When students were observed at their transition IEP meetings, three members of the IEP team rated students' degree of participation by utilizing the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric. As a whole, the intervention group performed better than the control group, as evidenced by their combined scores. As expected, students in the intervention group also outperformed students in the control group on each of the IEP meeting participatory behaviors. This result is likely due to the availability of tools such as the IEP Meeting Script and the Power Point template available to students in the intervention group. Students in the control group were not furnished with tools to utilize at their IEP meetings.

This section has presented the major findings of the present study as answers to each of the four research questions. In summary, most of the students in the intervention group demonstrated growth in self-determination skills and demonstrated an increase in scores on the IEP Survey[®]. As a group, students in the control group demonstrated more growth on the IEP Survey[®] than did students in the intervention group. However, the intervention group demonstrated more growth in self-determination skills and demonstrated more active participation in their IEP meetings than did the control group. The next section revisits the findings related to the scholarly literature.

Findings Related to the Literature

This section provides a discussion of the findings specific to their relation to literature presented in chapter two, which guided the present study. In addition, results

are discussed, which are organized by each of the four components of self-advocacy as identified by Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005). This discussion provides a different perspective on the results, which emphasizes emergent themes from qualitative analysis but also includes scores from quantitative data.

Research question one. The first research question guided the study in determining growth in self-determination skills and self-advocacy among students who received self-advocacy instruction. Based on pre-test and post-test scores on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®], one student in the intervention group did not demonstrate growth on her self-determination scores. However, intervention group students as a whole demonstrated a gain in percentile points from pre-test to post-test on the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®]. This result supports the results of a study conducted by Test and Neale (2004) in which all four middle school students in their sample made gains on their Arc's Self-Determination Scale[®] scores after having been instructed in a motivation and self-determination strategy.

On the IEP Survey[®], three of the five intervention group students in the present study demonstrated growth from pre-test to post-test. The group as a whole demonstrated an increase in a combined score from pre-test to post-test. A detailed discussion of students' growth on the IEP Survey[®] as it relates to the literature and the four components of self-advocacy follows in the next sections.

Research question two. The second research question explored whether self-advocacy instruction made a difference in the growth scores on the IEP Survey[®]. As a whole, the control group demonstrated more growth on the IEP Survey[®] than did the intervention group. The majority of students in both groups had no knowledge of their

own disability when queried on the IEP Survey[©] pre-test. After the students in the intervention group had received instruction in self-advocacy, they were able to demonstrate either partial knowledge or complete knowledge. Partial knowledge was indicated when they could not identify their own disability label but could identify at least one area impacted by their disability; complete knowledge was indicated when they could name their disability label or could name all areas impacted by their disabilities. Students in the control group demonstrated similar growth. These findings are consistent with those of the Phillips (1990) qualitative study of 15 adolescent students with disabilities who had participated in a self-advocacy intervention. After participating in the Self-Advocacy Plan, a four-step plan developed by Phillips to teach students to become self-advocates, students demonstrated an increased awareness of their disabilities.

Research question three. The third research question explored whether self-advocacy instruction made a difference in the growth scores on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©]. The results from research question three indicated that there was a considerable difference in growth scores between the intervention group and the control group. Students who had received self-advocacy instruction demonstrated considerably more growth on the Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] than students who did not receive self-advocacy instruction. In fact, the control group demonstrated a negative growth score from pre-test to post-test. This finding supports the results from Test and Neale's (2004) study in which students were instructed in a self-advocacy intervention. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale[©] was utilized as a pre-test and post-test. Results

indicated that all four students in the study made gains in their self-determination scores after they participated in the intervention.

Research question four. The fourth research question examined the differences in the degree of IEP meeting participation, as measured by the IEP Meeting Observation Rubric, between students who received self-advocacy instruction and those who did not. The findings from research question four indicated that students in the intervention group outperformed the control group on each of the IEP meeting participatory behaviors, which could have been attributed to the availability of the Power Point template that provided a visual cue for them in the IEP meeting. However, this finding is consistent with that of Meglemre (2010) in that IEP meetings became more participatory in nature when students utilized an essay they had prepared during an intervention group at their IEP meeting. The results from the present study also supports that of the Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al. (2006) study in which the majority of students who had not received instruction in self-advocacy or IEP meeting participation engaged in limited participatory behaviors at their IEP meetings. In addition, this same finding from the present study supports the results of the Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, et al. (2006) study in which students who had participated in an intervention aimed at IEP meeting leadership behaviors demonstrated more leadership behaviors at their IEP meetings than did the control group. This result from the present study is also consistent with that of the Arndt et al. (2006) results in which students who had received the same instructional focus as the Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, et al. (2006) study were found to have contributed more in their IEP meetings than did the control group. Finally, this same finding from the present study supports the results of the Test and Neale (2004) study in

which students who had received a self-advocacy intervention provided a higher quality of input in their IEP meetings.

Results from the four research questions have been discussed thus far. Specifically, the discussion provided a link to the scholarly literature mentioned in chapter two. In addition to discussing the results as answers to the research questions, a discussion follows of results as they relate to the components of self-advocacy that were identified by Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005). These discoveries are outlined in the next section in relation to the literature.

Results associated with self-advocacy. Components of self-advocacy have been discussed in previous chapters. The components identified by Test, Fowler, Wood, et al. (2005) include knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership. The following sections provide a discussion of the emergent themes associated with these four components in relation to the literature presented in chapter two. The discussion includes an emphasis on qualitative analyses but includes quantitative analyses as well. The researcher chose this format to provide a broader, enhanced perspective of the same results.

Knowledge of self. For the present study, data were collected and analyzed to ascertain students' knowledge of their disabilities, their accommodations, their goals for the future, and their interests. The following information provides a discussion of the emergent themes related to students' knowledge of self. The discussion begins with findings related to knowledge of personal disability and knowledge of accommodation needs. Then, the discussion continues with findings related to knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership.

Knowledge of personal disability. When students were queried on the IEP Survey[®] pre-test about their knowledge of their own disabilities, the majority of students in both groups demonstrated no knowledge. The following week when students responded to a journal prompt about their disabilities, one student in the intervention group continued to demonstrate no knowledge of his disability. Of the remaining students, both groups demonstrated an increased awareness, as they were able to demonstrate either partial or complete knowledge of their own disabilities. Partial knowledge indicated that students could not identify their disability label but could identify at least one area impacted by the disability. Complete knowledge indicated students could name their disability label or could name all areas impacted by their disabilities. The majority of students as a whole also demonstrated an increased knowledge of their disabilities as evidenced by their responses on the IEP Survey[®] post-test. This result is in contrast to the results of Meglemre's (2010) quasi-experimental study of 40 eighth grade students with learning disabilities in which students were instructed about their disabilities and accommodations, and were instructed in self-advocacy. Students completed pre- and post-intervention questionnaire related to knowledge of personal strengths, weakness, accommodations, and related to comfort level with communicating their needs to teachers. Students were asked to describe what they had learned about their disability that they did not know before participating in a self-advocacy curriculum. Varied responses indicated that only a few of the students who responded acknowledged they had a disability after the intervention. Similar results from the present study indicated that a majority of the students demonstrated no knowledge of their disabilities on the pre-test IEP Survey[®]. However, further assessments of students'

knowledge of their disabilities indicated an increased level of knowledge from IEP Survey[®] pre-test to post-test scores, and from journal prompt response to post-test IEP Survey[®] scores.

Knowledge of accommodation needs. Students were surveyed about their knowledge of accommodations or modifications on the IEP Survey[®] and, on the second journal prompt, were asked if they knew what their IEP goals and accommodations were. All students demonstrated no knowledge on the IEP Survey[®] pre-test and on the post-test, with the exception of one student in the intervention group who demonstrated increased knowledge. On the journal prompt, which took place between the pre-test and post-test, half of the students demonstrated no knowledge of their IEP goals and accommodations; most of these students were in the intervention group. Overall, when level of knowledge was compared between the two groups, the intervention group demonstrated lower levels of knowledge related to IEP goals and accommodation needs. However, there was little difference between the two groups, as the control group demonstrated only limited conceptual knowledge. These findings are consistent with Staab's (2010) results in which students continued to demonstrate limited understanding of their IEPs after having participated in their IEP meetings. Results are also consistent with results from the Meglemre (2010) study in which little differences were found between the intervention group and control group of students with regard to knowledge of their accommodations after having participated in a self-advocacy curriculum. Results also support Danneker and Bottge's (2009) results in that students did not have knowledge of their IEPs and were unable to identify their IEP goals before participating in an intervention aimed at educating students about the IEP. However, Danneker and Bottge (2009) found that all

students in their study were able to identify their IEP goals after receiving the intervention, an outcome not achieved in the present study.

Knowledge of rights. For the present study, knowledge of rights was discussed in terms of students' knowledge of special education laws. When students were queried about whether laws existed to help them in special education, the majority of students in both groups demonstrated no knowledge from pre-test to post-test. The lack of growth reflected with the intervention group could be attributed to the brevity of the instruction during one of the lessons on this particular topic. This finding extends the knowledge presented by Wood et al. (2004), which stressed that teaching students about their rights under IDEA may help students in the future when they need to learn about their rights under ADA and to practice self-advocacy in the workplace. However, the results from the present study make it clear that brief instruction about the existence of such laws is not effective in increasing students' knowledge of their rights as students with disabilities.

Communication. For the present study, communication was demonstrated by students' knowledge of self-advocacy, knowledge of the importance of self-advocacy, and the ability to identify ways to implement self-advocacy. Application of this knowledge was assessed during observations of students' IEP meetings with regard to their ability to communicate supports necessary for their success. With regard to students' conceptual knowledge of self-advocacy, results from pre-test to post-test were comparable between the two groups and indicated that all but one student in each group were uncertain about what a self-advocate was. However, with regard to students' understanding of the importance of self-advocacy, more students in the intervention

group demonstrated increased knowledge from pre-test to post-test on the IEP Survey[®]. With regard to students' ability to convey ideas for being a self-advocate, all students were able to provide responses that indicated their realization that being a self-advocate required either a behavioral improvement on their part, involved obtaining help, or both. Two-thirds of the control group students communicated necessary supports at their IEP meetings but required a prompt or cue to do so. This particular finding from the present study supports the results of Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al. (2006). In their study, they employed 10-second momentary time sampling during observations of 627 IEP team members in 109 IEP meetings at middle schools and high schools. Twelve essential student leadership behaviors were targeted during the observations, which included stating needed support. The majority of students who were observed at their IEP meetings did not state their necessary supports during their meetings.

Leadership. In the present study, leadership was assessed in relation to students' IEP meeting participation. Each student was observed at their transition IEP meeting and behaviors related to the nature of their participation were rated using a rubric. After the meeting, students were surveyed about their perceptions regarding their IEP meeting participation. Two of the three students in the intervention group denoted a positive feeling about their participation during their IEP meeting, compared to three of the four students in the control group who denoted a positive feeling during the meeting. All students in the control group reported positive feelings about their overall participation, compared to two of three students in the intervention group who reported positive feelings. Overall, the majority of students in both groups reported positive feelings with regard to their participation in their IEP meetings. These findings from the present study

support Danneker and Bottge's (2009) results in which students in their study who had participated in an intervention to teach students to lead their IEP meetings reportedly felt positive about their participation in the IEP meetings. Results of the present study were also consistent with results from the Arndt et al. (2006) study in which students reportedly felt they played an influential role in planning for their futures after they had received instruction in leading their IEP meetings.

As a group, students who had received the self-advocacy intervention demonstrated more IEP meeting participatory behaviors during their IEP meetings than students in the control group who had not received the intervention. These findings are inconsistent with those from Meglemre's (2010) study in which no significant differences were found, with regard to IEP meeting participation, between a group of students who received a self-advocacy intervention and a group who had not received the intervention. However, these findings of the present study are comparable to those in the Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, et al. (2006) study in which students who had not received an intervention did not engage in 9 of 12 leadership behaviors during their IEP meetings. These findings of the present study are also comparable to those in the Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, et al. (2006) study in which students who had received an intervention in IEP meeting leadership skills employed significantly more IEP meeting leadership steps than students who had not received the intervention.

This section has provided a detailed discussion of the outcomes of the present study and their relation to the scholarly literature that guided this study. Results were discussed in terms of answers to research questions. Then, results were discussed in terms of emergent themes in relation to the four components of self-advocacy. The next

section provides a discussion of the implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Conclusions

The final section of this chapter concludes with discussions related to how the results of the present study might be applied to current or future practice in the field of special education. In addition, suggestions are provided for ways in which future research might extend the findings of the present study. Finally, this chapter ends with concluding remarks.

Implications for action. Despite educators' efforts to comply with federal and state mandates to involve students in IEP meetings, too often little is done to prepare students for the IEP meetings (Trainor, 2005; Wehmeyer et al., 2007; Wehmeyer, Van Dycke, Greene, et al., 2006). When students attend their IEP meetings, researchers have found that their presence is merely tokenism because students do not understand their role and do not possess necessary skills to be able to participate meaningfully (Wehmeyer, Van Dycke, Greene, et al., 2006). Research has also demonstrated that students of varying ages and with diverse disabilities are able to learn strategies to improve their self-determination skills, self-advocacy skills, and IEP meeting participation, and the present study sought to contribute to that knowledge base.

The present study has implications for individuals in the field of special education interested in improving students' self-advocacy skills, self-determination skills, and quality of IEP meeting contributions. First, for special educators, this study offers insight into self-advocacy instruction that is more likely to have a positive impact on students' self-determination skills, knowledge of personal disabilities, self-advocacy skills, and IEP

meeting participation. Of particular interest, educators who value self-advocacy instruction, but yet believe there are too many barriers to be able to deliver instruction effectively, will find that even brief instruction can positively impact students' self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

For educational administrators interested in improving the postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, the results from this study offer insight into the effectiveness of brief interventions that can be easily implemented. In addition, administrators who have identified lack of resources as a barrier will find beneficial the evidence that unpublished curriculum and resources are effective in improving students' knowledge of their disabilities, self-determination skills, self-advocacy skills, and IEP meeting participation. The following section provides a discussion of recommendations for future research that might extend the findings of the present study.

Recommendations for future research. The goal of the present study was to examine how self-advocacy instruction impacts students with disabilities with regard to their self-advocacy skills, their self-determination skills, and their IEP meeting participation. Data were collected and analyzed to answer four research questions, and qualitative data were analyzed for emergent themes related to the literature that inspired this study. Various discoveries were consistent with those identified in the literature and provided insight into efficacious interventions. While useful, several weaknesses of this study warrant consideration. First, extraneous variables such as motivation, can impact student outcomes. This is especially true on self-report measures, which this study employed. The effects of negative attitudes were seen in students' responses to open-ended questions, and it is unclear whether the responses accurately reflected students'

perceptions and knowledge. Future research should implement follow-up interviews to supplement the open-ended responses. This would provide an opportunity to address negativity, lack of motivation, or misunderstanding, while at the same time provide clarity of students' responses.

Second, future researchers interested in replicating this study should consider a larger sample of students so that statistical analysis can be conducted and effects from attrition will be minimal. Results of the present study cannot be generalized to the population of all middle school students with disabilities due to the small sample size, which also did not allow for statistical analysis. Furthermore, attrition in both groups did not allow for consistent comparisons between groups.

Third, future researchers interested in replicating this study should consider reaching consensus on ratings rather than utilizing a combined score. This approach would allow for more consistent scores and more efficient data analysis than what was realized in the present study. Varying degrees of agreement among observers who rated students' behaviors in their IEP meetings in the present study made data analysis difficult. This effect could have been avoided by utilizing consensus of ratings.

Last, since knowledge of rights has been identified by researchers as an important component of self-advocacy (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001; Wood et al., 2004), future researchers should consider delivering more in-depth lessons to achieve a potentially more successful outcome than what the present study attained. Some of the discoveries from the present study indicated that students' knowledge of laws that provide protection to them as students with disabilities increased very little or not at all, even after having been provided explicit instruction on the topic. The brevity of instruction could have

impacted this outcome, as the laws were mentioned only once in a lesson that covered other topics. Knowledge of the IEP and accommodations also did not increase as notably as expected after students had received instruction on these topics. Perhaps more instruction in and exposure to IEPs is needed in order to make a positive impact on students' knowledge levels, which could begin earlier than middle school or earlier than eighth grade. Thus, future researchers should consider educating students on their IEP, their accommodations, and their rights as students with disabilities at an earlier age.

This section has provided a discussion of recommendations for future research to extend the findings from the present study. Further, weaknesses of the present study have been identified and suggestions have been provided for addressing them. The next section of this chapter concludes with a final summary of the study and closing remarks.

Concluding remarks. The results of the present study contributed to the work of previous researchers in the area of self-advocacy instruction and students with disabilities. This examination revealed that self-advocacy instruction was effective in increasing students' self-determination skills, as well as students' quality of IEP meeting participation and knowledge of the importance of self-advocacy. However, results also revealed that instruction was not effective in increasing students' knowledge of the IEP, knowledge of their accommodations, and knowledge of their rights as students with disabilities.

This study showed that students are able to participate meaningfully in their IEP meetings. Perhaps the most profound findings were revealed in students' descriptions of their feelings and perceptions regarding their participation in the IEP meeting. A mixed methods design allowed the researcher to gain insight into these elements that a

quantitative study could not have afforded. Students' statements such as, "I felt proud," "I was excited," and "I felt that I did something" reinforced the importance of students' inclusion in the IEP process. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that students require some degree of instruction with regard to understanding themselves as unique learners before their participation in their IEP meetings can become meaningful. Special educators who are dedicated to their students' success in school and beyond have an obligation to instruct their students in self-advocacy so they can become contributing IEP team members and experience positive post-secondary outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

Adolescent Version

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Adolescent Version) is a student self-report measure of self-determination designed for use by adolescents with cognitive disabilities. The scale has two primary purposes:

- To provide students with cognitive disabilities and educators a tool that assists them in identifying student strengths and limitations in the area of self-determination; and
- To provide a research tool to examine the relationship between self-determination and factors that promote/inhibit this important outcome.

The scale has 72 items and is divided into four sections. Each section examines a different essential characteristic of self-determination: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization. Each section has unique directions that should be read before completing the relevant items. Scoring the scale (see [Procedural Guidelines](#) for scoring directions) results in a total self-determination score and subdomain scores in each of the four essential characteristics of self-determination. A comprehensive discussion and exploration of self-determination as an educational outcome is provided in [The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines](#), as well as detailed scoring procedures and a discussion about the use of self-report measures in general. The scale **should not be** used until the administrator is thoroughly familiar with these issues.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Adolescent Version) was developed by The Arc National Headquarters with funding from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement #H023J20012. Questions used in Section One (Autonomy) were adapted, with permission from the authors, from the [Autonomous Functioning Checklist](#). Questions used in Section 4 (Self-Realization) were adapted, with permission from the author, from the Short form of the [Personal Orientation Inventory](#). Appropriate citations for both instruments are available in [The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines](#). The Arc gratefully acknowledges the generosity of these researchers.

By Michael Wehmeyer, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
Kathy Kelchner, M.Ed., Project Director
Self-Determination Assessment Project

Student's name _____

Date _____

School _____

Teacher's name _____

The
Arc

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Section One

Autonomy

Directions:

Check the answer on each question that BEST tells how you act in that situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Check only one answer for each question. (If your disability limits you from actually performing the activity, but you have control over the activity (such as a personal care attendant), answer like you performed the activity.)

1A. Independence: Routine personal care and family oriented functions

1A. Subtotal _____

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. I make my own meals or snacks. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 2. I care for my own clothes. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 3. I do chores in my home. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 4. I keep my own personal items together. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 5. I do simple first aid or medical care for myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 6. I keep good personal care and grooming. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |

1B. Independence: Interaction with the environment

1B. Subtotal _____

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 7. I make friends with other kids my age. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 8. I use the post office. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 9. I keep my appointments and meetings. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 10. I deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |

1C. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Recreational and leisure time

1C. Subtotal _____

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 11. I do free time activities based on my interests. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 12. I plan weekend activities that I like to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 13. I am involved in school-related activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 14. My friends and I choose activities that we want to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 15. I write letters, notes or talk on the phone to friends and family. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 16. I listen to music that I like. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |

1D. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities:					1D. Subtotal _____			
Community involvement and interaction								
17. I volunteer in things that I am interested in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
18. I go to restaurants that I like.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
19. I go to movies, concerts, and dances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
20. I go shopping or spend time at shopping centers or malls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
21. I take part in youth groups (like 4-H, scouting, church groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
1E. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Post-school directions					1E. Subtotal _____			
22. I do school and free time activities based on my career interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
23. I work on school work that will improve my career chances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
24. I make long-range career plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
25. I work or have worked to earn money.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
26. I am in or have been in career or job classes or training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
27. I have looked into job interests by visiting work sites or talking to people in that job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
1F. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Personal expression					1F. Subtotal _____			
28. I choose my clothes and the personal items I use every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
29. I choose my own hair style.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
30. I choose gifts to give to family and friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
31. I decorate my own room.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
32. I choose how to spend my personal money.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not even if I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do sometimes when I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do most of the time I have the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do every time I have the chance
Please check Section One, A thru F, to make sure there is only one answer for each question.								

Section Two

Self-Regulation

Directions:

Each of the following questions tell the beginning of a story and how the story ends. Your job is to tell what happened in the middle of the story, to connect the beginning and the end. Read the beginning and ending for each question, then fill in the BEST answer for the middle of the story. There are no right or wrong answers.

Remember, fill in the one answer that you think BEST completes the story.

2A. Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving

33. **Beginning:** You are sitting in a planning meeting with your parents and teachers. You want to take a class where you can learn to work as a cashier in a store. Your parents want you to take the Family and Child Care class. You can only take one of the classes.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you taking a vocational class where you will learn to be a cashier.

Story Score _____

35. **Beginning:** Your friends are acting like they are mad at you. You are upset about this.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you and your friends getting along just fine.

Story Score _____

34. **Beginning:** You hear a friend talking about a new job opening at the local book store. You love books and want a job. You decide you would like to work at the bookstore.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you working at the bookstore.

Story Score _____

36. **Beginning:** You go to your English class one morning and discover your English book is not in your backpack. You are upset because you need that book to do your homework.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you using your English book for homework.

Story Score _____

37. **Beginning:** You are in a club at school. The club advisor announces that the club members will need to elect new officers at the next meeting. You want to be the president of the club.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you being elected as the club president.
Story Score _____

38. **Beginning:** You are at a new school and you don't know anyone. You want to have friends.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you having many friends at the new school.
Story Score _____

2A Subtotal _____

2B: Goal setting and task performance

Directions:

The next three questions ask about your plans for the future. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. For each question, tell if you have made plans for that outcome and, if so, what those plans are and how to meet them.

39. Where do you want to live after you graduate?

I have not planned for that yet.
 I want to live _____

List four things you should do to meet this goal:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

40. Where do you want to work after you graduate?

I have not planned for that yet.
 I want to work _____

List four things you should do to meet this goal:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

41. What type of transportation do you plan to use after graduation?

I have not planned for that yet.
 I plan to use _____

List four things you should do to meet this goal:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

2B Subtotal _____

Section Three

Psychological Empowerment

Directions:

Check the answer that BEST describes you.

Choose only one answer for each question.

There are no right or wrong answers.

42. I usually do what my friends want... or
 I tell my friends if they are doing something I don't want to do.
-
43. I tell others when I have new or different ideas or opinions... or
 I usually agree with other peoples' opinions or ideas.
-
44. I usually agree with people when they tell me I can't do something... or
 I tell people when I think I can do something that they tell me I can't.
-
45. I tell people when they have hurt my feelings... or
 I am afraid to tell people when they have hurt my feelings.
-
46. I can make my own decisions... or
 Other people make decisions for me.
-
47. Trying hard at school doesn't do me much good... or
 Trying hard at school will help me get a good job.
-
48. I can get what I want by working hard... or
 I need good luck to get what I want.
-
49. It is no use to keep trying because that won't change things... or
 I keep trying even after I get something wrong.
-
50. I have the ability to do the job I want... or
 I cannot do what it takes to do the job I want.
-
51. I don't know how to make friends... or
 I know how to make friends.
-
52. I am able to work with others... or
 I cannot work well with others.
-
53. I do not make good choices... or
 I can make good choices.
-
54. If I have the ability, I will be able to get the job I want... or
 I probably will not get the job I want even if I have the ability.
-
55. I will have a hard time making new friends... or
 I will be able to make friends in new situations.
-
56. I will be able to work with others if I need to... or
 I will not be able to work with others if I need to.
-
57. My choices will not be honored... or
 I will be able to make choices that are important to me.

Section 3 Subtotal _____

Scoring Step 1:

Record the raw scores from each section:

Autonomy

1A =

1B =

1C =

1D =

1E =

1F =

Domain Total:

Self-Regulation

2A =

2B =

Domain Total:

Psychological Empowerment

3 =

Domain Total:

Self-Realization

4 =

Domain Total:

Scoring Step 2:

Sum each Domain Total for a Total Score:

Self-Determination

Total =

Scoring Step 3:

Using the conversion tables in Appendix A, convert raw scores into percentile scores for comparison with the sample norms (Norm Sample) and the percentage of positive responses (Positive Scores):

Norm Sample	Positive Scores
-------------	-----------------

Autonomy

1A =

1B =

1C =

1D =

1E =

1F =

Domain Total:

Self-Regulation

2A =

2B =

Domain Total:

Psychological Empowerment

3 =

Domain Total:

Self-Realization

4 =

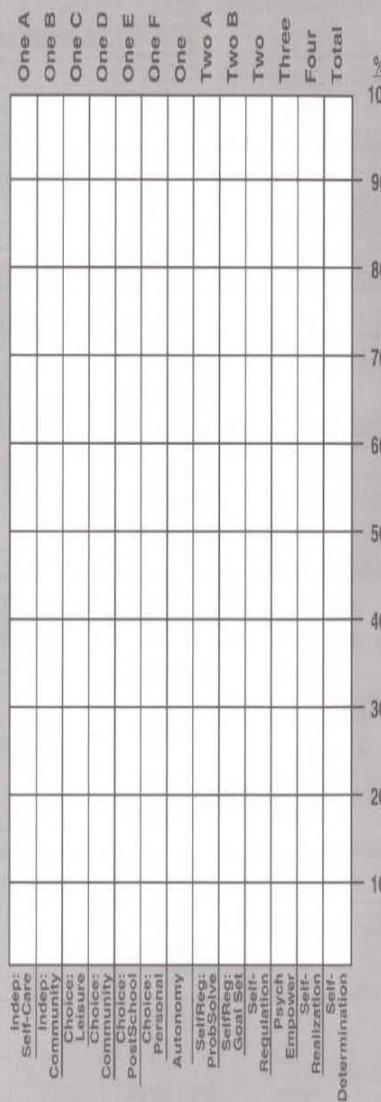
Domain Total:

Self-Determination

Total Score =

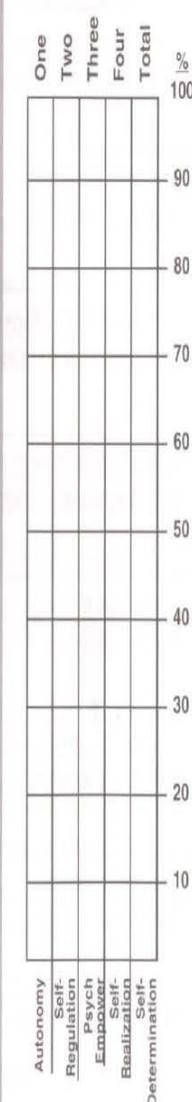
Scoring Step 4:

Fill in the graph for the percentile scores from the norming sample. From the appropriate percentile down, darken the complete bar graph (See example in Scoring Manual):



Scoring Step 5:

Fill in the graph for the percentile scores indicating the percent positive responses.



Appendix B: IEP Survey Scoring Rubric

IEP Survey Scoring Rubric

0 = "I don't know" or no response	1 = Response not related to specific questions or incorrect response	3 = Response related to the question but did not contain specific details	4 = Response was appropriate for the question and contained specific details
--	---	--	---

Appendix C: IEP Survey[®]

IEP Survey

Ideas adopted with permission from *IEP Survey*© Nicole Held 2007

Name: _____

Date: _____

*Please answer the questions below the best you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. What is a disability?
2. What is your disability?
3. What is an IEP?
4. What does IEP stand for?
5. How does an IEP help you in your education?
6. What is an accommodation or modification?
7. Are there any laws to help you in special education?
8. What is a self-advocate?
9. Why is being a self-advocate important?
10. How many times have you been to your IEP meeting?
11. Are you comfortable participating in your IEP meetings?
If yes, tell why:

If no, tell why:
12. What do you do at your IEP meetings?

Appendix D: IEP Meeting Observation Rubric

IEP Meeting Observation Rubric

Adapted from *Self-Directed IEP* (Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1997)

BEHAVIOR	0 Did not demonstrate behavior	1 Demonstrated behavior with prompt or cue from adult or Demonstrated partially	2 Demonstrated behavior <u>without</u> prompt or cue from adult	Comments:
Introduced Self				
Introduced IEP Team Members				
Stated Purpose of the Meeting				
Reviewed IEP Goals and Progress				
Asked for Feedback				
Stated Needed Support				
Expressed Interests				
Expressed Goals for the future				
Closed Meeting by Thanking Everyone				

Appendix E: Journal Writing Prompts

Journal Writing Prompts

Adapted with permission from *Difabilities* materials © Nicole Held 2007

1. What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future?
2. What do you think your IEP goals and accommodations are?
3. What are 3 ways you want to try to be a better self-advocate this year?
4. Having a disability and being in special education can sometimes lead to situations where you may feel frustrated, uncomfortable, or very confused. Read the situation below and tell how you would handle it.

My tests and assignments are too hard and too long. I can barely get them finished and sometimes I cannot read what they say.

Appendix F: IEP Meeting Script

IEP Meeting Script

- 1. Begin By Greeting Everyone and Stating Purpose of the Meeting.**
 "Welcome to my meeting. Today we are looking at my IEP and talking about changes for next year in high school."
- 2. Introduce Yourself and Others.**
 "My name is _____". "I'd like to introduce.....
 _____, My _____ (Mom, Dad)
 _____, Resource Teacher
- ** Ms. ____ will talk about the Student Information Page**
- 3. Review How You Have Been Doing in School**

My Goal	My progress (how am I doing?)

4. Things that have helped me this year (Accommodations you need to be successful)

	Quiet place for tests
	Tests read aloud to me
	Guided or modified notes
	Use a calculator
	Extra time to complete assignments
	Study guide

5. Things that have NOT helped me this year

6. Request Feedback From Others in the Meeting.

“Does anyone want to talk about how my school year has been going?”

****Ms. ___ will discuss your goals for next year or any changes****

7. Identify Your Goals for After High School

“When I finish high school, I am interested in :

“Any questions or comments?”

“Does anyone have anything they want to say about my program?”

8. Close the Meeting

“Thank you all for coming to my meeting.”

“This year I am going to work hard to accomplish my goals.”

“I appreciate your help.”

Appendix G: IEP Meeting Reflection Survey

Appendix H: Permission to use *Difabilities* Curriculum Materials

Re: self-advocacy materials

Nicole Paulson [NPaulson@dce.k12.wi.us]

Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2011 2:21 PM**To:** Rebecca L Presley**Attachments:** Advocacy Lessons Week 1.DOC (36 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 2.DOC (38 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 3.DOC (40 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 4.DOC (39 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 5.DOC (46 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 6.DOC (47 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 7.DOC (45 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 8.DOC (44 KB) ; Advocacy Lessons Week 9.DOC (39 KB)

HI there. I did my final thesis on this topic, but honestly would have to track that down. I will look around for it over Christmas break and get back to you. I do have weekly lesson plans for the unit if you would like them (I attached them in case) and yes you are more than welcome to use the materials. I appreciate you checking. Please let me know if I can help in any other way. Im very happy to hear that they were useful to you!!!

>>> Rebecca L Presley <RebeccaLPresley@stu.bakeru.edu> 12/21/2011 8:34 AM >>>

My name is Rebecca and I'm a school psychologist in Kansas. I am interested in using your materials for an intervention with a group of 8th graders at the middle school I work at. I also work at a high school and have been appalled at the number of students who don't even know about their disability. I believe very strongly in educating students about their disabilities so they can advocate for themselves. I am also working on my doctoral dissertation and thought it would be fabulous if I could do some research on the intervention. I didn't see anything specific on your website about the materials being copyrighted so I thought I would check with you to see if you are comfortable with me using them. Also, have you or anyone else done any research using your materials? Any information would be very helpful and appreciated. You have done a fantastic job of designing the lessons/material. I hope to hear from you soon!

Rebecca

Appendix I: School District Approval

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 2:30 PM
To: Rebecca L. Presley
Subject: RE: research proposal

Attached is a copy of my Directors' report which shows that you received district approval from us. The Directors' reports are listed on the BOE agenda so they had a copy of my information showing that we had approved your study. See page 4. The practice in USD [REDACTED] at this time will be to approve research studies at the district level, not the BOE level. If you need a copy of the BOE agenda for last night, you can print it off of the website. Will this work for you?


Unified School District


 Department of Special Services
 

To: USD  Board of Education
 Dr. , Superintendent of Schools

From: , Director of Special Services

Date: January 9, 2012

Subject: Director's Report

USD  Special Education News
Support from Parents of Students in Special Education

We often become so busy dealing with problems that we overlook all of the great work happening each and every day in the district. The vast majority of the parents and guardians of students with special needs are very strong partners with the district. We work very hard to involve our families in the development of Individual Education Programs (IEPs) to ensure that students receive the services they need. One of the most rewarding experiences for our teachers is to have a parent let us know that they appreciate the work that we do together for our students. On 12/13/11, we received this email:

Hello everyone,

Thank you so much again for such a strong and wonderful IEP as well as tireless team and individual effort you all have put into help [student name] succeed!!! I also would like to thank you for working with us so closely and continuously! We are so fortunate to have you as his teachers, and cannot thank you enough. Words definitely do not do the justice, but we wanted to express how grateful we are to you all who are in [student name] and our lives.

The Special Services Department is looking forward to a wonderful new year and we plan to work hard to continue the positive partnerships with our families!

Center-Based Programs

USD 232 provides special education services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Due to the differences in needs among students with disabilities, there is no single definition for the LRE. The LRE for any particular student is the placement in which the services they require can be delivered most effectively while ensuring that the student is educated with students who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate.

- The IEP team, including staff and parents, determine the most effective service or combination of services and then determine the most appropriate *placement* to deliver those services.
 - *Placement* means *special education setting or general education setting*. A district must maintain a continuum of placements ranging from all day in the general
- 

education classroom, to part-time general education/part-time special education setting, all the way to services provided in the home or hospital setting.

- Placement does not mean location (the school where the service is provided.)

What is different about a Center-Based Program?

- Services are specialized. Students from across the district come to a particular location that serves their needs most appropriately.
- The staffing ratio is usually smaller.
- The staff may have specialized training.
- The setting may have specialized equipment or structure (quiet spaces, sensory rooms, seclusion room, private bathroom and/or shower.)

When do we consider Center-Based Programs?

- For a small number of students, the home school does not provide the LRE and a center-based option may be considered.
- We have a specific process that we use to make these determinations.

Where are Center-Based Programs in USD [REDACTED]?

- [REDACTED] Elementary (1)
- [REDACTED] (2)
- [REDACTED] (1)

When more than one center-based program may be appropriate, how are decisions made?

- The staff utilizes a Least Restrictive Environment process. Staff from all center-based programs being considered observe the student in the current setting and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each program under consideration.
- The input of the parent is considered.
- Other considerations include:
 - Current numbers of students in each program
 - Home school of the student
 - The needs of a student that may be so significant as to override other concerns (such as easy access to a restroom or safe room)
- When two or more programs may serve the needs of a student, the decision is made by administrators (principals, special education coordinators, and/or special education director.)

Decisions regarding center-based programming can be complex. Effective communication between staff members and families is a critical component of the decision-making process.

Kansas State Assessment for Students with Disabilities

Many students with disabilities are able to complete the Kansas State Assessment in the same manner as their peers. For those students who require a different assessment option, IEP teams must consider:

1. Kansas State Assessment with Accommodations (quiet location, read-aloud, etc.)
2. Kansas Assessment of Modified Measures: KAMM (grade-level assessment based on modified achievement standards.) The KAMM is different from the general assessment in the following ways:
 - Some indicators may not be assessed.
 - Fewer questions may be asked.
 - Fewer response options may be provided.
 - Simpler language may be used.
3. Alternate Assessment—a portfolio assessment for our students with the most significant disabilities.

The Alternate Assessment is a complex, labor-intensive assessment that is administered over a several month period.

- Each tested area (reading, math, social studies, and science) requires a separate portfolio.
- For each portfolio, 5 indicators from the standards are assessed.
- For each selected indicator, teachers must provide 3 samples of student work demonstrating knowledge of the indicator.
- Each work sample must have at least 5 points of data taken from the student response to the activity.
- In 2011-2012, 41 students qualified for the Alternate Assessment.
- 106 portfolios will be developed for these 41 students.
- The special education teachers who work with our students dedicate an enormous amount of effort assembling the portfolios. Keep in mind these are our most fragile learners. The teachers are very creative and resourceful when working with the students to get the best work from them. I cannot say enough about the work these teachers do to showcase our students on the Kansas Alternate Assessment. They should be applauded.
- ██████████ our Functional Specialist, heads up the Alternate Assessment for the district. Her work is outstanding since there are many details and timelines that must be attended to with great care. She motivates the teachers and goes out of her way to assist them in this monumental task. We are all so appreciative of her efforts. Our students always do well on the Alternate Assessment thanks to their teachers and ██████████ leadership.

Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign

Did you know that using the word “retard(ed)” to describe a person or action can cause pain to people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and friends? It’s time to ***Spread the Word to End the Word!*** Nearly 200 million people around the world have intellectual disabilities which makes it the largest disability population in the world.

Most people don't think of the R-word as hate speech, but using the R-word is just as cruel and offensive as any other slur.

The Special Olympics organization started the **Spread the Word** campaign about five years ago and it has grown steadily ever since. March 7, 2012 is the official date and all of our schools will be participating in some way. Watch for upcoming details. For more information, please visit the website www.r-word.org

Research Study

The Special Services Department routinely receives proposals from graduate students attending universities in our area who wish to conduct research in our district. We believe it is in the best interest of our students and to the field of special education to partner with the universities when possible. The proposals are carefully screened to ensure that studies involve minimal disruption to students' instruction, minimal time commitment by staff members, and a perceived benefit to students and/or the field. We also try to accommodate staff members working on advanced degrees when possible.

We have approved a study request by a staff member enrolled in a doctoral program who is investigating the effect of Self-Advocacy instruction for students with disabilities ages 14 and older. We often find that older students do not fully understand the impact of their disabilities and effective means of advocating for their needs in school and/or in the workplace. Self-Advocacy instruction helps students acquire the skills needed to effectively communicate with others about their disability in order to be more successful in school and on the job. Parents of students will be contacted with details of the study and asked to provide consent. The study will take place during the spring of 2012.

Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

The next parent information meetings will be held on January 17th (6:30pm) and January 19th (1:00pm). The topic will be Financial Planning for families of students with disabilities. The guest speaker will be [REDACTED] from the Special Needs Planning Center.

ACCESS House-December Summary

- ACCESS students toured the Overland Park Marriott. The students were able to see first-hand how the hotel runs. They toured the laundry area, kitchen, gift shop, restaurant and housekeeping.
- Office [REDACTED] came to ACCESS on December 2nd to speak with the young adults about Safety. Topics covered included: How to know when you're in an unsafe situation; what to do if you find yourself in an unsafe situation; when to call 911; Cell Phone usage; Internet Safety
- On December 3rd, ACCESS students attended the [REDACTED] Holiday Bazaar. The young adults worked in shifts to sell their homemade dog treats.

- On December 9th, ACCESS House students attended the [REDACTED] Rotary meeting to share information about the ACCESS Program. Students and staff in attendance were invited to eat breakfast, join in the traditional Rotary meeting format and then share about their work experiences and a typical day at ACCESS. The young adults then sold their dog treats to interested members of the rotary.
- On December 15th, students went to the [REDACTED] Mall to play Cosmic Mini Golf. Before golfing, students ate at Red Robin where they sat together as a group, ordered individually and then paid for their own meals. Prior to the outing the young adults were given instruction related to ordering at a "sit-down" restaurant, manners and tipping.
- On December 16th, ACCESS House hosted a winter party for those seniors from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] High who will be attending ACCESS in the fall. The students exchanged Holiday cards and spent the morning getting to know each other and staff better by playing board games, visiting, eating healthy snacks and getting exercise on the Wii.

Parents as Teachers-December News

- Parent Educators had 69 visits with 82 children and their parents.
- Fathers participated in 35% of the home visits.
- USD # [REDACTED], Parents as Teachers enrolled 4 new families.
- 26 children were screened in the areas of health, hearing, vision and development.
- Several families were referred to Infant Toddler Services, USD # [REDACTED] ECSE monthly screening and the Post-partum resource center.
- Average playgroup attendance in December was 21 children, parents, caregivers and grandparents.
- 50 dads, moms and children attended "Campout with Dad's Playgroup" on Wednesday, December 7, 2011.
- PAT Community Service Project ended. Diapers and wipes collected were taken to the [REDACTED] Multi-Service Center on Monday, December 19, 2011.

District Health Services: Summary of Activities for December:

- Care plans (IHPs) are continually developed and updated for students requiring nursing care.
- AEDs are checked monthly to ensure every AED is functional.
- District CPR classes are being scheduled for second semester. 3 CPR classes will be offered at an upcoming education day (Diff Day) for district employees.

Exclusion Policy-Updated information

- Monitoring immunization compliance, contacting parents of non-compliant students and entering immunization records was a priority for the nurses during December.
- Principals made personal calls to the parents of non-compliant students during December. Talking points were provided to assist the Principals in these phone calls. Some schools sent out mass emails to parents and the district sent a text message to parents, as well.

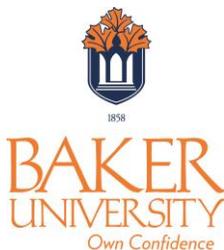
- [redacted] and [redacted] met with the Principals to develop an action plan for students that remain non-compliant on the first day of second semester. Every effort has been, and will continue to be, made to collect records and assist families in obtaining immunizations for their children prior to excluding students at the start of second semester.
- Nurses now have access to the Kansas Web IZ program and have obtained approximately 15-20 immunization records for students. Health Services plans to continue to utilize this service to obtain immunization records in the future.
- As the chart below shows, we have made tremendous progress in reducing the number of non-compliant students due to the efforts of the nurses and principals:

Non-compliant Students	Oct 31st	Nov 7th	Nov 14th	Nov 21st	Nov 28th	Dec 5th	Dec 16th
[redacted] Elementary	31	28	21	19	19	12	8
[redacted] Elementary	15	13	12	10	10	7	4
[redacted] HS	121	109	105	95	85	72	37
[redacted] Elementary	20	17	16	12	10	8	4
[redacted] MS	68	36	35	29	27	26	11
[redacted] MS	140	135	135	92	83	62	29
[redacted] HS	249	239	217	182	165	117	38
[redacted] Elementary	3	3	2	1	1	1	0
[redacted] MS	129	119	105	100	79	52	18
[redacted] Elementary	16	15	13	6	6	2	0
[redacted] Elementary	2	3	3	3	3	1	1
[redacted] Elementary	36	32	27	22	23	22	7
	830	749	691	571	511	382	157

If you have any questions or comments about the information for Special Services, please feel free to contact me.

[redacted], Ph.D.
 Director of Special Services
 [redacted] (phone)
 [redacted] (fax)
 [redacted]@usd[redacted].org

Appendix J: Baker University IRB Approval



January 29, 2013

Rebecca L. Presley



Dear Ms. Presley:

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application (E-0156-0125-0129-G) and approved this project under Expedited Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Baker University IRB requires that your consent form must include the date of approval and expiration date (one year from today). Please be aware of the following:

1. At designated intervals (usually annually) until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the IRB.
2. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify the OIR about any new investigators not named in original application.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the IRB Chair or representative immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform Office of Institutional Research (OIR) or myself when this project is terminated. As noted above, you must also provide OIR with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from the IRB one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carolyn Doolittle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'C'.

Carolyn Doolittle, EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Appendix K: Intervention Group Parent Consent Form

Permission to Participate in a Special Project

Date: From: Rebecca Presley at _____
 (School Contact Person) (Building) (Phone)

To:
 (Parent/Legal Educational Decision Maker)
 Address:

Phone:
 Student:
 School:

We are seeking permission for your student to participate in the special project described here.

Description of the Project: Students with disabilities who possess a good understanding of themselves and their learning needs are more actively engaged in their education and are more successful in life after high school. Rebecca Presley, school psychologist, and _____, resource teacher, will be beginning a unit for students to learn about their IEP and their learning needs. This Self Advocacy group will include a small group of students and will take place every Wednesday during START time for six weeks, beginning around February 1st. Activities will include a survey, journal entries, an observation of your student at the Spring IEP meeting, and an audio-recorded informal interview. The main purpose of this group is to empower students to become actively engaged in their education and to acquire skills to be able to participate meaningfully in their IEP meetings.

In this group, students will:

- Learn about their disability
- Learn the parts of the IEP
- Discover the learning style that works best for him or her
- Learn self-advocacy skills
- Help write their IEP and prepare to participate meaningfully in their upcoming transition-to-high-school IEP meeting in the Spring

The group will not meet if there is a special grade level or school-wide activity, such as an assembly or party. Confidentiality will be mandatory for all group participants and no one will be required to talk about anything they do not feel comfortable sharing.

If you approve, please sign, date, and return this form with your student or in the enclosed envelope:

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Rebecca Presley at _____ or _____.

- I give permission for my student, _____ to participate in the Self Advocacy Group specified in this notice. I understand my permission is voluntary and may be revoked at any time.
- I do not give permission for my student, _____ to participate in the Self Advocacy Group specified in this notice.

_____ Date _____
(Parent/Legal Education Decision Maker)

Would you like to know your student's results? Yes No

Appendix L: Control Group Parent Consent Form

Permission to Participate in a Special Project

Description of the Project: Students with disabilities who possess a good understanding of themselves and their learning needs are more actively engaged in their education and are more successful in life after high school. Rebecca Presley, school psychologist at _____ Middle School, will begin a project with a group of students to examine their knowledge of personal learning needs, self-advocacy skills, and degree of involvement in their IEP meetings. This project will begin around February 1st and will require students to participate in activities designed to assess knowledge of their disability and IEP, level of comfort at IEP meetings, and degree of self-advocacy skills. Specifically, over a six-week period, students will:

- Complete two surveys about IEPs, disabilities, and self-advocacy
- Complete a questionnaire to measure self-determination skills
- Record a brief journal entry in response to a given question (4 times over a six-week period)
- Be observed at the transition-to-high-school IEP meeting in the Spring
- Participate in an audio-recorded informal interview following the IEP meeting

Students will not be required to talk about anything they do not feel comfortable sharing and all information obtained will be kept confidential. Activities will take place during a non-instructional block of time. With the exception of the observation at the IEP meeting, each activity is anticipated to require no more than 15 minutes. Accommodations for activities will be provided to students as outlined on their IEPs.

If you approve, please sign, date, and return this form with your student or in the enclosed envelope:

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Rebecca Presley at _____ or _____.

I give permission for my student, _____ to participate in the special project specified in this notice. I understand my permission is voluntary and may be revoked at any time.

I do not give permission for my student, _____ to participate in the special project specified in this notice.

_____ Date _____
(Parent/Legal Education Decision Maker)

Would you like to know your student's results? Yes No

Appendix M: Control Group Parent Consent Form-Spanish Version

Permiso para participar en un Proyecto Especial

Fecha: De: Rebecca Presley en _____
 (La persona contacto en la escuela) (Construcción) (Teléfono)

A:

(Padre / Persona Jurídica Decisión de la Educación)

Dirección:

Teléfono:

Estudiante:

Escuela: XXXX

Estamos buscando permiso para que su estudiante pueda participar en el proyecto especial que se describe aquí.

Description of the Project: Los estudiantes con discapacidad que poseen un buen conocimiento de sí mismos y sus necesidades de aprendizaje son más activos en su educación y tienen más éxito en la vida después de la secundaria. Rebecca Presley, psicóloga de la escuela _____, iniciará un proyecto con un grupo de estudiantes para examinar los conocimientos de sus necesidades personales de aprendizaje, habilidades de apoyo para sí mismo, y el grado de participación en las reuniones de su Plan Individual de Educación (IEP). Este proyecto se iniciará el 1 de febrero y requerirá que los estudiantes participen en actividades destinadas a evaluar los conocimientos de su discapacidad y el IEP, el nivel de comodidad en las reuniones del IEP, y el grado de capacidad de apoyo para sí mismo. Para resumir, durante un período de seis semanas, los estudiantes:

- Completar dos encuestas sobre los IEP, las discapacidades, y apoyo para sí mismo.
- Completar un cuestionario para medir habilidades de autodeterminación (una vez en enero y una vez en febrero)
- Registrar en un diario escrito en respuesta a una pregunta determinada (4 veces en un período de seis semanas)
- Se observa la transición en la segunda reunión del IEP en primavera.
- Participar en una entrevista informal grabada en audio después de la reunión del IEP

Los estudiantes no estarán obligados a hablar de lo que no se sienten cómodos de compartir, y la información se mantendrá confidencial. Las actividades se llevarán a cabo durante un periodo en que no tengan clases. Con la excepción de la observación en la reunión del IEP, cada actividad se prevé que no requieran más de 15 minutos. Acomodaciones para las actividades se proporcionará a los estudiantes como se describe en su IEP.

Si usted está de acuerdo, por favor firme, coloque la fecha y devuelva esta forma con su hijo/a o en el sobre adjunto:

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca de este aviso, por favor póngase en contacto con Rebecca Presley en el _____.

- Doy permiso para que mi hijo/a, _____ participe en el proyecto especial especificado en este aviso. Entiendo que mi consentimiento es voluntario y puede ser revocado en cualquier momento.
- No doy permiso para que mi hijo/a, _____ participe en el proyecto especial especificados en este aviso.

_____ Fecha _____
(Padre / Tutor educativo legal)

Appendix N: Student Confidentiality Agreement

Dear Student,

During this unit, we will be talking about many things that are confidential, private, or sensitive. To participate in this unit you must agree to follow the following rules.

1. I will keep everything we talk about in class confidential. This means that what is said in class, stays in class.
2. I will not make fun of anyone in this class for any reason.
3. I will participate in class. This does not mean you have to share anything that you do not want to, but you will participate in all activities, journals, and discussions.
4. I will take the information given to me and use it responsibly. In other words, just because I have a disability, does not mean I can use that disability as an excuse for bad or inappropriate behavior.
5. I will do my best to listen and gain as much knowledge about my disability so that I will be a good self-advocate.
6. I will take what I learn in this unit and use this knowledge in my classes throughout the year.

I agree to follow all of the above rules and expectations for this unit.

Student Signature

Date

Student Printed Name

Adapted with permission from *Student Confidentiality Agreement*®, Nicole Held 2007

Appendix O: Power Point Lesson Sample

Lesson 1: Why do I have an IEP, anyway?

- An IEP is for students who have a disability and need extra help at school
- What is a disability? There are several different types of disabilities. We will talk about 2 of them:
 - Learning Disability
 - Other Health Impairment
- Learning Disability: People with learning disabilities are not “dumb.” They are smart but have a difficult time learning some things, like reading, math, writing, processing information, or organization. The brain "processes" information differently so the person learns differently. It's like road construction on a trip—you might have to take a detour but you still get there.
- Are people with learning disabilities all the same?
 - No, but all students with learning disabilities have a difficult time at school and get frustrated.
- Do people ever outgrow learning disabilities?
 - A true learning disability never goes away.
 - Using strengths is important to make weaknesses not so severe.
 - Many people with learning disabilities are highly creative and "gifted" in many ways.
 - Do you know of anyone with a learning disability? (show students pictures of celebrities with learning disabilities)
- Other health impairment (OHI): A medical condition such as ADHD, diabetes, asthma, seizures, or other health problem that interferes with learning.
- ADHD
 - Inattention
 - Difficulty paying attention, easily distracted, difficulty staying organized
 - Hyperactivity
 - Fidgety, restless, can't sit still very long
 - Impulsivity
 - difficulty with thinking before acting; say what comes to mind without thinking first; sometimes blurt out comments

Do you know anyone with ADHD or other health problems? (show students pictures of celebrities)

Activity: What do you think your disability is and how do you feel about it? How will it affect you now and in the future?