

Application of the ChoiceMaker Curriculum for Teaching Self-Determination Skills to
Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities in a Private Day Setting

By Angela C. Chambers

B.S., 2000, University of Delaware
M.S., 2004, Johns Hopkins University

A Dissertation submitted to

The Faculty of The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

January 31, 2010

Dissertation directed by:

Carol Kochhar-Bryant
Professor of Special Education

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of The George Washington University certifies that Angela C. Chambers has passed the Final Examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of November 16, 2009. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

Application Of The ChoiceMaker Curriculum For Teaching Self-Determination Skills To Students With Emotional And Behavioral Disabilities In A Private Day Setting

Angela C. Chambers

Dissertation Research Committee

Carol Kochhar-Bryant, Professor of Special Education, Dissertation Director

Robert Ianacone, Professor of Special Education, Committee Member

Lynda West, Professor of Special Education, Committee Member

Pat Schwallie-Giddis, Associate Professor of Counseling, Committee Member

Dedication

Bill- for your incredible support throughout this process. I am who I am because of you.

Dr. Kochhar- Thank you for advisement and encouragement that surpasses all expectations.

Mr. Curcio- I have no doubt I the lessons I learned from you will be ones I rely on the rest of my life. You have changed the course of my professional career- I am so very grateful for your investment and faith in my abilities.

Acknowledgement

Board of Child Care- Staff and agency for allowing the research to occur and for supporting the project.

Dr. Martin- for assistance and framework

Abstract

Application of the ChoiceMaker Curriculum for Teaching Self-Determination Skills to Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities in a Private Day Setting

Self determination skills enable individuals to advocate for their needs, make decisions, and improve their ability to function independently in the world (Jones 2006). Students who receive special education services are not always part of the decision making process concerning their own progress. Under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, special education services end at age twenty-one along with the safety net they provide, the importance of explicit teaching of self determination skills cannot be overstated. This study identified a curriculum that would aide students with emotional, behavioral disabilities (EBD) in a private day setting developing and or enhancing their self determination skills in an effort to improve their ability to function independently.

The purpose of the study was to determine if the “ChoiceMaker” Curriculum is a viable product to use with students who have EBD to improve their ability to set and attain goals. The students in the study were educated in a private separate day school in a self-contained classroom. Using self-determination theory and the construct of quality of life as the lens, the study examined the student’s ability to develop and utilize self-determination skills with and without instruction. The study used a single subject multiple baseline design to track the students progress through out the intervention with a partial withdraw method.

The cohort comprised of six students, three male and three female students who were interviewed, observed and then provided an intervention through the

“ChoiceMaker” Curriculum to target self-determination skills through goal setting and attainment. The students set and tracked Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals each week over a thirteen week period. The expected outcome of this research was to: (a) promote student involvement in setting, achieving, and mastering goals set by the educational team; and (b) serve as the basis for future study of self-determination.

The study yielded favorable results demonstrating that “ChoiceMaker” is an effective tool to use with EBD students in a private separate day setting, illustrating the need for further research in: students with dual labels including EBD and learning disabled, and students with EBD and a low IQ.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF TABLES.....	xi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Potential Significance.....	8
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Self-Determination and Philosophy.....	9
Self-Determination and Psychology.....	9
Self-Determination and Personality Psychology.....	10
Self-Determination and Disability.....	10
Summation of Self-Determination Context.....	11
Summary of the Methodology.....	11
Delimitations and Limitations.....	13
Delimitations.....	13
Limitations.....	14
Definition of Terms.....	15
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Context of Special Education Law and Self-Determination.....	17
Theoretical Framework.....	19
Defining Self-Determination.....	20
Research on Self-Determination and Student Outcomes.....	21
Self-Advocacy Skills and the Relationship to Self-Determination Skills.....	22
Transition and Quality of Life.....	25
Research Related to Instruction of Self-Determination Skills.....	26

Research Student Participation in the IEP	27
Research on Self-Determination and Goals Attainment	29
Research on Curriculum for Teaching Self-Determination Skills	31
Research on the Choice Maker Curriculum	33
Summary	36
 CHAPTER III: METHODS	 38
Overview	38
Epistemology for the Research	39
Design	40
Research Procedures	41
Participants	41
Setting	43
“ChoiceMaker” Curriculum	44
Baseline: Goal Selection and Attainment without Instruction	45
Dependant Measure	46
Procedure for Implementation	46
Data Collection	48
Data Analysis	49
Human Participants and Ethics Precautions	50
Potential Risks	50
Consent	50
Confidentiality	50
Avoiding Bias	50
 CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	 52
Purpose of the Study	52
Research Questions	52
Phase 1: Baseline	52
Phase 2: Intervention	53
Phase 3: Maintenance	54
Description of Participating Students	55
Student 1	55
Reaction to study	56
Baseline	55
Student Interview Results	56
Staff Assessment of Skills	57
Interpretations of Results for Student 1	57
Research Questions explained in relationship to student 1	58
Table 3:	59
Student 2	60
Reaction to study	60
Baseline	61

Student Interview Results	61
Staff Assessment of Skills	61
Interpretations of Results for Student 2	61
Research Questions explained in relationship to student 2.....	62
Table 4:	63
Student 3	63
Reaction to study.....	64
Baseline.....	64
Student Interview Results	64
Staff Assessment of Skills	64
Interpretations of Results for Student 3	64
Research Questions explained in relationship to student 3.....	65
Table 3:	65
Student 4	65
Reaction to study.....	66
Baseline.....	66
Student Interview Results	67
Staff Assessment of Skills	67
Interpretations of Results for Student 4	68
Research Questions explained in relationship to student 4.....	69
Table 6:	70
Student 5	70
Reaction to study.....	71
Baseline.....	71
Student Interview Results	72
Staff Assessment of Skills	72
Interpretations of Results for Student 5	72
Research Questions explained in relationship to student 5.....	72
Table 7:	73
Student 6	74
Reaction to study.....	74
Baseline.....	75
Student Interview Results	75
Staff Assessment of Skills	76
Interpretations of Results for Student 6	76
Research Questions explained in relationship to student 6.....	76
Table 8:	77
Whole Group Comparisons.....	78
Comparison by Gender	78
Table 9	78
Comparison by full scale IQ	78
Table 10	79
Results Related to Research Questions.....	79
Table 11	81
Challenges to using the Curriculum.....	83

Table 10	85
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	86
Research Questions.....	86
Question 1	87
Direct Conclusions.....	87
Interpretative Conclusions	92
Speculative Conclusions	93
Questions 2.....	94
Direct Conclusions.....	94
Interpretative Conclusions	94
Speculative Conclusions	96
Implications for Future Research.....	97
Policy Implications	98
Recommendations.....	99
Summary.....	100
REFERENCES	103
APPENDICES.....	107

Table Of Tables

Table 1: Time Table of Project.....	40
Table 2: Participant Overview.....	41
Table 3: Results for Student 1.....	58
Table 4: Results for Student 2.....	62
Table 5: Results for Student 3.....	65
Table 6: Results for Student 4.....	69
Table 7: Results for Student 5.....	73
Table 8: Results for Student 6.....	76
Table 9: Comparison by gender.....	77
Table 10: Comparison by IQ.....	78
Table 11: Group Results.....	80
Table 12: Week Totals.....	84
Table 13: Time Table of Project.....	94

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), P.L. 108-446, entitles all students to a free and appropriate education (FAPE). The definition of “appropriate” varies greatly from student to student. The education of students with special needs requires multiple approaches that balance a free and appropriate education and the least restrictive environment, while ensuring that students’ needs are met (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999; Wehmeyer, Schalock 2001). IDEA 2004 requires that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) specifically addresses deficits and needs of individual students. Curricula must also be developed to assist in meeting the annual goals and objectives set forth in an IEP, including both academic skill sets and social and emotional skill sets. One area that receives little formal attention in the curriculum is self-determination. Students without disabilities typically acquire self-determination skills naturally from everyday activities and events. However, research indicates that students with disabilities often lack a self-determination skill set (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; Nathanson, Baker, & Tamura, 2002).

Self-determination skills enable individuals to advocate for their needs, make decisions, and improve their ability to function independently in the world (Jones 2006). The Results from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (NLTS) indicated that 55% of youth with emotional disturbance drop out of school, compared to 36% of all students with disabilities over the same time period (Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow 2005).

The lack of involvement in choice, goal setting, and self-advocacy leaves students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD) ill-prepared to respond constructively to the stressors of life after the supports of the school setting are no longer in place (Agran & Wehmeyer, 2003). Special education can provide a comfortable bubble for the student, but outside the classroom, the same safety, accommodations and support seldom exist. Upon graduation, students are expected to live and succeed in the same professional and personal world as their nondisabled peers. However, students often experience an environment where many choices are made for them, where stressors are resolved before the student is even aware of them, and where there are multiple professionals whose responsibility it is to ensure success through scaffolding and intensive services (Field & Hoffman, 2002).

The construct of quality of life is closely related to self-determination skills. Quality of life can be affected by an individual's ability to self-advocate and to set and attain goals. The term "self-determination skills" is often synonymously used with "self-advocacy skills," and both terms represent the same idea. The skill sets of self-determination and self-advocacy are illustrated through individuals who are prepared, practiced, and well versed in their own wants and needs and in expressing those feelings to produce life choices with positive outcomes (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998; Zimmerman, 2002).

According to Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001), individuals have to learn the skills necessary to plan, set, and achieve goals, to become the causal agents in their lives. These monumental tasks have proven even more difficult when the students are uncertain

how to express their own desires, wants, and needs, or advocate for themselves, as opposed to being dependent on family members and service providers.

Transition has been referred to as a time of stress and uncertainty for all teens, especially those with disabilities (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, 1999). Youth with EBD struggle to complete high school and obtain jobs. Forty-eight percent of students with EBD drop out of grades 9–12, compared with 30% of all students with disabilities (Osher, Morrison, & Bailey, 2003). Currently, high dropout rates and low job retention rates for the EBD population suggest that these students do not persist when they are frustrated or feel that a task is insurmountable. In addition, students with EBD are not able to sustain employment, as do their nondisabled peers. Because these students respond differently if the job is not to their liking, they often simply quit and seek other means to achieve purchasing power. They are often not in jobs long enough to achieve advancement and the corresponding improvement in their work life and standard of living (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005).

According to Wagner et al. (2005), students with EBD struggle with finishing tasks and anticipating the long-term consequences (both positive and negative) of decisions. These skills of making positive choices—self-advocacy, goal setting, and goal attainment—are all subsets of self-determination. A lack of self-determination represents a serious barrier to higher graduation rates and positive employment patterns for this group of students. Researchers have concluded that if students are provided direct instruction and counseled on how to break large goals into manageable and obtainable

smaller goals, and are taught how to identify the accommodations and modifications that assist them in the classroom, then skills could be generalized to postsecondary endeavors.

To target these needed skills, educators who design curricula have included specific goal attainment and self-determination components. While there are many types of curricula for strengthening goal attainment, “ChoiceMaker”, developed by Martin, Marshall, & Huber (1999), provides educators with an in-depth curriculum to target self-determination skills through a three-step process. The first step is goal setting, the second is expressing goals, and the third is taking action. The curriculum is composed of an assessment, lessons, and then a post assessment evaluation to assist educators and students in gauging the growth of self-determination and goal attainment skills.

“ChoiceMaker” is a curriculum that was developed by Marshall et al. in 1999. It provides educators with an in-depth curriculum to target self-determination skills through a three-step process. The first step is goal setting, the second is expressing goals, and the third is taking action. The curriculum comprises an assessment, lessons, and then a post-assessment evaluation to assist educators and students in gauging the growth made during the process. There are seven lessons, and they incorporate the skills a student needs to break down a goal and begin working toward meeting and maintaining the goal.

Two studies have examined the effectiveness of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum for students with disabilities. German, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2000) examined the effectiveness using the curriculum with six adolescents with mild to moderate disabilities. The teacher wrote goals for each student on goal cards which were taken directly from their IEP. During phase one of the study, students were asked to choose a goal each day to work on, but were given no instruction. Over a three-week period, “Take Action”

lessons (Jerman & Martin in 2000) were added to the daily routine, and the students continued to pick daily goals. Then, with teacher and paraprofessional observation, the team decided whether, at the end of each day, the student had met the designated goal. Maintenance was judged by a student's ability to consistently meet the goal over a six-day period with no prompts or reminders. Results revealed that the Take Action curriculum lesson package produced an increase of goals attained for all six students. The "ChoiceMaker" curriculum has been validated with adolescents with learning disabilities and college-age students, but has not been validated with other disability populations, age groups, or settings. This research study explores the use of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum for students with EBD in a private separate day setting to establish the effectiveness of the curriculum with high school-age students with EBD. There are two outcomes of this research: (a) to promote student involvement in setting, achieving, and mastering goals set by the educational team; and (b) to serve as the basis for future study of self-determination.

Statement of the Problem

A key outcome of special education is contained in IDEA 2004 transition services mandates, which require that students with disabilities be provided transition services that are outcome-oriented (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001, p. 14). Current practices may not include teaching self-determination skills as part of the transition plan. However, self-determination skills can be pivotal in the post-secondary successes of students with disabilities. In a study by Thoma, Nathanson, Baker, and Tamura (2002), self-determination is discussed as being the most important skill addressed in a transition plan.

Research is available on the effects of self-determination skills in students with learning disabilities and students with mild mental retardation, but there is a lack of research on students with EBD, specifically students with EBD in private, separate day settings. Students in a private separate day facility often experience a very restrictive setting and have little opportunity to interact with their nondisabled peers. Furthermore, the environment is extremely structured and supportive to maximize the students' success by eliminating stressors and distractions. According to Redmond and Hosp (2008), students with EBD tend to have below-average attendance when compared with their non-disabled peers. In a study conducted by Mattison in 2004 a cohort of 89 middle school students with a diagnosis of EBD during a time period of 0-72 days, averaged 15 days of non attendance. Although these students are not often the focus of research they make up almost 5% of the students with disabilities aged 6 to 21 in special education, according to the Office of Special Education Programs(OSEP) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Data Analysis Systems, 2005). This study seeks to better understand the use of the self-determination curriculum with this population. Although benefits and protections under IDEA are important, the quality of the IEP process determines the services the children will actually receive and the extent of their engagement in the IEP development and implementation. The heart of IDEA is the IEP (Bateman & Herr, 2003). While IDEA defines the key components of the IEP (i.e., the child's level of performance, measurable annual goals, benchmarks, and a statement of need for special education services), specific guidance is not provided on the desired level of student engagement until the student becomes of transition age (age 16). At age 16, the student is invited to participate in the IEP meeting. IDEA implies that the

IEP is the students' comprehensive program and requires that transition-age students be invited to the IEP meeting; however the law is silent on the nature of their direct involvement (Barrier & McDonald, 2002).

Most students, particularly those with emotional and behavioral disabilities, remain minimally engaged in the planning or monitoring process, rendering it less effective than it could be (Brown & Rowland, 1998; McGahee, Mason, Wallace, & Jones, 2001; Powers, Turner, Matuszewski, Wilson, & Phillips, 2001; Thoma, 2001; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000). Students' lives are directly affected by the goals, strategies, accommodations, and implementation of their individualized programs (Piehler-Zickel & Arnold, 2001). Yet, many students are disinterested in their IEPs; they think that the programs are not useful and do not feel any sense of ownership (National Council on Disability, 2000).

While there has been research that examines self-determination skill development for students with LD, there is minimal research related to students with EBD. More specifically, there has been minimal research on the effectiveness of specific curricula that addresses goal attainment and self-determination in students with EBD, and the role of student responsibility in achieving individual goals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of the Choice Maker curriculum with EBD high school students in a private separate day setting. The study sought to understand how student direct involvement and responsibility-taking for goal achievement affects their progress in IEP goals and enhanced self-determination skills.

Research Questions

This research explored the following questions:

1. Was “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self-determination skills to EBD students in a private separate day setting?
 - a. Did students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills was provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum
2. Did the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal-achievement process?
 - a. Did an increase in student responsibility promote goal attainment?
 - b. Did an increase in student awareness of IEP goals promote IEP progress (as noted by mastery of specific IEP goals and objectives)?

The study explored the effectiveness of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum for teaching self-determination skills and engaging students in the goal-achievement process. The study explored the impact of students taking responsibility for goal attainment, student involvement in IEP goal mastery, and the development of self-determination skills.

Potential Significance

This research sought to contribute to the literature on field of self-determination through goal attainment, specifically for students with EBD. The outcome of this research was twofold: (a) to serve as the basis for future study of self-determination, and (b) to promote student involvement in setting, achieving, and mastering goals set by the educational team. The field is relatively new, and additional research is required to

measure the long-term benefits of self-determination skills for students with EBD. As discussed previously, students with EBD struggle to maintain employment and lead successful lives. Conclusions and generalizations can be made regarding the importance of developing this skill set for students with EBD, by conducting additional research and using this study as a foundation, studying the long-term benefits of self-determination.

Conceptual Framework

This research was shaped by the theory of self-determination, which is defined by Wehmeyer, Abery, Mithaug, and Stancliffe (2003) as “acting based on one’s own mind or free will, without external compulsion(s)” (p. 96). Self-determination theory developed from several areas of study, including philosophy and psychology.

Self-Determination Philosophy

Self-determination is a derivative of the debate over free will and determinism. Free will is understood as possessing the ability to choose for one’s self. Determinism is divided into two constructs—hard and soft determinism. Wehmeyer et al. (2003) proposed that with hard determinism every event and every action is affected by causal laws that account entirely for the occurrence of events or actions. Soft determinism is defined as every action being caused somehow, but not every action being compelled. This debate has been traced through Biblical writings, and philosophers dating back to the 1600s have struggled over the age-old argument of free will versus determinism. Philosopher John Locke was a known soft determinist and hypothesized that all human thought comes from sensation and reflection; and, therefore, all human action comes from human thought. Locke’s contributions regarding the causes of human action as both

caused and volitional are part of the foundation for the concept of modern self-determination (Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

Self-Determination and Psychology

Psychology, a discipline that emerged in the nineteenth century, changed the debate of free will versus determinism because psychologists believed in only hard or soft determinism. The anti-determinism view was completely disregarded by the field of psychology. Psychologists such as Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon were associated with soft determinism, while others involved in the field, like Henry Goddard, were associated with hard determinism. These psychologists believed that crime, prostitution, and poverty could almost entirely be explained by lack of intelligence, which dictated actions. Hard determinism became the more widely accepted view within the field of psychology. Sigmund Freud and Burrhus Frederick Skinner were also hard determinists and differed only on the causal agent. Freudian theory attributes the id as the causal agent, while Skinner attributes external causes. However, both theories are based on hard determinism. Although self-determination is evident in early psychology, it is not until his work titled *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* that Skinner directly comments on self-determination by summarizing that human behavior is a result of conditioning, and that any other theories that contradict his own can be explained by reinforcement contingencies (Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Martin, 2006; Walden, 2000).

Self-Determination and Personality Psychology

A prominent and well-known psychologist in the 1940s, Andras Angyal, (Angyal, 1948) proposed the following when developing a science of personality: the identification of founding principles, biological total process, or the movement of organisms from

undifferentiated parts to an organized whole. He defined the science of personality as the study of two essential determinants to human behavior—self-determination or other-determined.

Self-Determination and Disability

Nirje first referred to self-determination (1972) in a chapter titled “The Right of Self-Determination,” in Wolfensberger’s *Normalization: The Principle of Normalization in Human Services*: “Thus, the road to self-determination is both difficult and all important for a person who is impaired” (p. 177). Nirje taught and advocated for all people, regardless of disability, to be able to control life experiences such as education, vocations, activities, and decision-making. In a synopsis of Nirje’s chapter, Wehmeyer et al. (2003) summarized that Nirje identified self-determination in individuals as the ability to make choices, self-advocate, and as efficacy, self-management, self-knowledge, self-regulation, autonomy, and independence.

Summation of Self-Determination Context

Self-determination was evident in early philosophy and psychology and traced through the last century, evolving lastly with the normalization movement of the 1970s. Since that time, self-determination awareness, training, and knowledge have continued to grow in the disability arena. In the last decade, self-determination has become an area of increased focus due in large part to the federal legislation that includes self-determination as a fundamental part of transition services (Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

Summary of the Methodology

This ideographic qualitative study employed participant observation, multiple case study, and an open-ended survey for the educational staff who case manage the students being studied. A qualitative design was appropriate for this study because the data gathered in interviews and open ended questions allowed for a more in depth view of the student's knowledge or lack of knowledge. This design allowed for close monitoring to ensure the researcher can identify the point at which improvement or change occurs (Engel & Schutt 2005). This research employs a single-subject design that was applied to a small group of students. The study used a multiple baseline design, which simultaneously measures two or more behaviors, subjects, or settings in order to identify a pretreatment (baseline) level. The design allowed for close observation of participants in support of gathering data to demonstrate the day-to-day successes of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum, and did not rely solely on the numbers of pre- and posttest data. This study involved teaching a small group of diploma-seeking students with EBD who were placed in a private separate day setting, using the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum and tracking their progress. Students were administered a pretest to gauge their existing level and knowledge of self-determination skills. Next, the students chose weekly goals to work on, and their progress was charted to establish a baseline. The lessons were implemented after two weeks, and students' progress was continually charted to determine the effectiveness of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum.

The students participated in a thirteen week small group study using the packaged lesson plans to gather pre, post, and observation data on the effects of the curriculum to support the students in setting and reaching educational goals. The goals were taken

from their IEP, and students worked collaboratively with research and classroom staff to break the goals into parts to support goal attainment. Participants as well as service providers were surveyed pre- and post intervention to gather data on the success of the intervention. In addition, participants were observed during the eight-week intervention period in three settings to gather qualitative data on their abilities to generalize the skill set while in the school. This method of triangulation of data (Ernest, J & Monroe M. 2006) allowed for collection of the most accurate data while allowing for a true measure of the generalization of the skill set. Not only were the individuals surveyed but observations were conducted by service providers and pre- and post data provided multiple data sets to analyze qualitatively. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Was “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self-determination skills to EBD students in a private separate day setting?
 - a. Did students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills was provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum
2. Did the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal-achievement process?
 - a. Did an increase in student responsibility promote goal attainment?
 - b. Did an increase in student awareness of IEP goals promote IEP progress (as noted by mastery of specific IEP goals and objectives)?

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

The study was purposefully delimited to special education students placed in a private separate day setting. In addition, the disability category and the age bracket were limited specifically to students with formally identified with EBD in high school. The students were of high school age and were serviced in a self-contained classroom. The study was conducted in the mid-Atlantic region, in a mixed suburban, urban setting. This setting exists because students are referred from surrounding areas and travel as far as 50 miles to attend the school. Students are referred to this facility due to educational, emotional and psychological needs which cannot be met in the public school system. Students receive a small and structured class size, low class ratio, crisis intervention and psychiatric services. These specialized services are in addition to the services designated on their IEP such as speech and language, occupational and physical therapy and/or a behavior intervention plan.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the study. One limitation includes the potentially intervening factor that students involved in the study matured emotionally and demonstrated growth with decision making and the self-determination skill set that was not a result of the intervention. . Since the study was an exploratory study of a small group of particular students the expectation was not that the results could be easily generalized with other populations but that the study serves as a basis for future research.

The ideographic, qualitative nature of the study indicates that caution should be taken when generalizing to other populations and settings.

Definition of Terms

Individualized Education Program a document which provides a uniform structure, required setting and long and short term goals and objectives to benchmark progress. (Deshler, Ellis & Lenz, 1996 p.479)

Self-Determination. the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to make choices regarding one's actions free from undue external influence or interference (Wehmeyer, 2004 p. 305).

Self-Advocacy. This is the ability to speak up for what we want and need (Eisenman & Tascione, 2002).

Emotional & Behavioral Disabled (EBD) defined in IDEA 2004 Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section

IDEA (2004): retrieved January 11, 2007

Learning Disability A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

However, learning disabilities do not include, "...learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage." *34 Code of Federal Regulations §300.7(c)(10)*

IDEA (2004) Retrieved January 11, 2007

Private Separate Day School includes children and youth with disabilities receiving special education and related services, at public expense for greater than 50 percent of the school day. This may include children and youth placed in:

- private day schools for students with disabilities, or
- private day schools for students with disabilities for a portion of the school day (greater than 50 percent) and in regular school buildings for the remainder of the school day.

Retrieved January 11, 2007, from <http://cecp.air.org/resources/stats/defedplc.asp>

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review was conducted to provide an exploration of recent research in the area of student levels of self-determination through goal attainment. The focus of the literature was on recent research spanning the last 20 years, with a greater focus on research conducted within the last 10 years. This literature review first presents a legal and historical background and then a theoretical framework for self-determination. The literature examined research that has addressed the relationships between self-determination, goal attainment, and the effectiveness of tools that measure such goal attainment for a population of EBD students in a private separate day setting.

The review also examined the preparation of special education teachers to teach self-determination skills, their understanding of the skill set and how to teach it, and their awareness of the role of the IEP in targeting skill acquisition.

Context of Special Education Law and Self-Determination

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum with EBD high school students in a private day setting. The study sought to understand how student direct involvement and responsibility-taking for goal achievement affects their progress in IEP goals and enhanced self-determination skills. The need to produce self-sufficient youth is not a new phenomenon. Currently, state and local curriculum standards and the curricula derived from these standards emphasize—across elementary, middle, and secondary school ages—instructional experiences

pertaining to goal-related components, thus demonstrating the importance of offering training in these skill sets. The presence of such state and local standards pertaining to self-determination illustrates the universality of the need for instruction in self-determination for all students (Turnball & Turnball, 2006; Zigmond, 2006).

The IEP process is best described as a team process to determine the overall school program for the identified student. However, in just the last decade, the standard IEP team grew to include more members. P.L. No 108-446 directs that students participate whenever appropriate in their IEP meetings. Previously, students have been excluded for an extended amount of time from their IEP meetings; and, even with this new law, student attendance and participation was still low. According to Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004), many schools do not invite students to their own IEP meetings. Unfortunately, because of the lack of knowledge and the uninviting of students, too few students actively participated in their own IEP meetings (Gillespie & Turnbull, 1983). In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) used the foundation of P.L. No. 94-142 and added four transition reforms: (a) students 14 years or older must be invited to their IEP meeting; (b) IEP discussions and decisions must reflect student interests and preferences; (c) students' postschool dreams provide the direction for developing a plan of needed transition services; and (d) students' general education teachers must attend the IEP meetings. Since the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, a change was made increasing the age of mandatory invitation from 14 to 16 years of age. The concepts incorporated into IDEA 2004 reflected the expectation of Congress that schools would ensure maximum participation of students in their IEPs. However,

O'Leary (2001) found that many schools do not invite students to their own IEP meetings.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the constructs of Erikson's eight stages of adolescent development, Wolfensberger's normalization principle and Wehmeyer's self-determination theory. Adolescent development lends itself as the baseline for examining the abilities through out the development of a child, normalization provides views as to the decision making abilities of an individual and self-determination being the culmination of both adolescent development and normalization.

Erikson provided an in depth view of the developing child from infancy through adult hood. For the purpose of this study, each stage will be summarized but the development process applicable is only through stage five. The eight stages are as follows (Erikson, 1959):

1. Learning Basic Trust Versus Basic Mistrust- infancy through one to two years old where a child forms meaningful connections with caregivers and begins to trust. Children not treated properly develop mistrust issues that can manifest later in life.
2. Learning Autonomy Versus Shame –ages two through four, during which a child learns to exert his or her own will. Tantrums as well as test of wills are typical in this stage.
3. Learning Initiative Versus Guilt- late preschool until school aged, this stage involves playing, fantasy and make believe, lead as well as follow others. For children impacted by guilt- they are restricted in their play and development and depend largely on adults not joining in play groups.
4. Industry Versus Inferiority- school age up to and can include junior high

school. This stage involves free play to engaging in structured activities and demonstrating self discipline. Accomplishing tasks such as team oriented sports, school work and home work.

5. Learning Identity Versus Identity Diffusion- ages thirteen to twenty this stage involves developing a strong sense of self and experimenting to determine which roles fit the child and what attributes he or she wishes to possess. Many times adolescents will engage in risk taking behavior during this stage as they experiment with the varying aspects of their personality.

6. Learning Intimacy Versus Isolation – the stage where a young adult can experience successful intimate relationships which can build foundations for life long partnerships such as marriage.

7. Learning Generativity Versus Self-Absorption-adulthood, working creatively and in both the personal and professional arenas.

8. Integrity Versus Despair-successful adults are well adjusted, proud of family members, strong in their beliefs and able to function well in society.

After reviewing Erikson's eight stages of development, the focus for this study is on stage five. Here the adolescent begins to develop a strong sense of self and make decisions which impact the type of person he or she will become. This stage is extremely relevant to normalization and self-determination.

According to a review of literature conducted by Walden (2000), self-determination has its roots in religion, philosophy, political science, and politics. Walden provided context by tracing the concept through both history and the religious writings of John Scott (*The Christian Life*, 1699), and then again through philosopher John Locke in

his 1715 essay “Humane Understanding.” The concept of and the term “self-determination” has appeared throughout history, including in relation to the economic development of emerging nations. However, it was not until the normalization movement, which focused on including members of society with disabilities and involving them in as normal a life as possible, that the term was applied within the field of education. Self-determination was first referred to by Nirje (1972) in a chapter titled “The Right of Self Determination,” in Wolfensberger’s *Normalization: The Principle of Normalization in Human Services*. Nirje uses the term self-determination: “thus the road to self-determination is both difficult and all important for a person who is impaired (p.177).” Nirje taught and advocated for all people regardless of disability to take control over life experiences such as education, vocations, daily activities, and decision-making.

Defining Self-Determination

Wehmeyer et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of the history of the concept of self-determination. He summarized Nirje’s definition of self-determination in individuals as the ability to make choices, self-advocate, be self-efficacious, and possess self-management, self-knowledge, self-regulation, autonomy, and independence. Wehmeyer (2006) redefined self-determination, stating that self-determined behavior refers to volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one’s life and to maintain or improve one’s quality of life (p. 117). Individuals with higher levels of self-determination can readily muster behavioral resources for autonomous action and self-regulation along with internal affective resources of self-realization and psychological empowerment to accomplish their personal goals (Eisenman, 2007 p.2). In addition, the concept of self-advocacy was explored and defined by Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes

(1988) as a key component of self-determination. The emergence and nurturance of self-determination skills is necessary for the healthy growth of all adolescents (Wehmeyer, 2007). For example, many students in general education have the opportunity to choose their classes, declare a program or course of study, and set up a school schedule to include study halls, electives, and courses of interest. Special education students' abilities and opportunities to choose classes, schools, and schedules are much more limited and are often decided by the IEP team. However, the IEP team may or may not include active participation of the student.

Self-determination is related to the developmental process for the individual.

Field, Hoffman, and Posch (1997) describe the need for self-determination skills in students with disabilities as

a result of facing the confounding factors during the adolescent period and dealing with (a) physical, cognitive, or behavioral issues associated with their disability; (b) social relationship issues and possible stigma resulting from disability status; (c) heightened concern of parents and family members related to increased independence of the adolescent; and (d) the inability of systems (e.g., schools, employers, agencies) to adequately accommodate the needs of adolescents with disabilities. (p. 285)

Self-determination skills require time to grow and develop. This development is best supported by opportunities to experience setting goals, making decisions and anticipating consequences both positive and negative. During adolescent development and in school is a natural place for the development of self-determination skills to occur. Self-determination skills are necessary in the day to day functioning of an adult. Adults must make decisions for themselves which affect multiple areas of their life while anticipation outcomes of these decisions. The purpose of schools is to create adults who

are autonomous (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes 2001). Many students move through the school years successfully and are given more choices and responsibilities as they grow older. More choices, more independence, and increased responsibilities have a positive impact on students' academic performance, employment status, independence, and quality of life (Carter, Lane, Pierson, & Glaeser 2006). However, many special education students are ill-prepared for such a role due in large part to the lack of opportunity to learn and practice self-determination skills. Martin, Marshall, Maxson, and Jerman (1993) provide this analogy:

If students floated in life jackets for 12 years, would they be expected to swim if the jackets were suddenly jerked away? Probably not. The situation is similar for students receiving special education services. All too often, these students are not taught how to self-manage their own lives before they are thrust into post-school reality. (Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1993, p. 2)

A review of literature in these areas reveals that students who are taught self-determination skills are more reflective, better able to reach personal goals, and more self-assured (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). The research of Eisenman and Chamberlain (2001) explored the role of self-determination in school completion. They concluded that “individuals with higher levels of self-determination can readily muster behavioral resources for autonomous action and self-regulation along with internal affective resources of self-realization and psychological empowerment to accomplish their personal goals” (p.2). Self-determination can also aide in successful transitions. Carter et al. state, “Successful post school transitions require that adolescents assume more prominent roles in educational and life planning—understanding and communicating their strengths and needs, setting and working toward self-selected goals, advocating for themselves, and self-assessing their own progress and outcomes” (p.334). Youth with

disabilities can fall short of the aforementioned ultimate goal because of underdeveloped self-determination skills (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Self-Advocacy Skills and the Relationship to Self-Determination Skills

Self-determination skills are often used synonymously with self-advocacy skills, and both terms represent the same intent: individuals who are prepared, practiced, and well versed in their wants and needs, and express those feelings to result in life choices. Wehmeyer summarized the need to be prepared this way: “to become the causal agent in his or her life, a person has to learn the skills necessary to plan, set, and achieve goals” (Wehmeyer, 1996, p. 24). Self-advocacy, the ability to speak up for what we want and need, is an expectation for success in both college (Eisenman & Tascione, 2002) and employment (Gerber & Price, 2003). These important self-advocacy skills are also a critical feature for living a self-determined life. In essence, self-determination skills are now viewed as essential for successful postsecondary transition outcomes (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). The role of self-advocacy skills in relation to self-determination skills is an important distinction to make. Individuals who are self-determined are able not only to set and achieve goals, but also to advocate for their needs, wants, and desires as they relate to goal setting. Each element of the self-determination skill set is necessary to produce self-sufficient adults.

Research on Self-Determination and Student Outcomes

This section discusses the relationship between self-determination and student outcomes.

Eisenman (2007) observed,

Although no studies have yet examined self-determined learning theory in relation to long-term outcomes of school completion, the components of self-determined learning theory mesh well with studies that link persistence in school to

identifying personally meaningful transition goals, improving students' self-understanding in ways that enable them to advocate for themselves, and receiving support to achieve goals through a relevant curriculum. (p. 3)

There is current research to suggest that self-determination skills assist with postsecondary success. Research conducted by Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) indicated that individuals with high scores of self-determination were more likely to be employed and obtain higher wages one year after graduation than those with low self-determination scores. In the same study, the impact of student self-determination status on the postsecondary outcomes of 80 youth with mild mental retardation or learning disabilities was examined. The data revealed a consistent trend in which self-determined youth had more positive adult outcomes than their peers with lower self-determination scores. Students in the high self-determination group were more likely to have expressed a preference to live outside the family home and were more independent. Eighty percent of the high-scoring group worked for pay one year after graduation, and only 43% of the low-scoring group did so. In addition, the high-scoring group earned more per hour than their peers in the low-scoring group. Although this research does not include EBD students as a subgroup, this researcher hypothesizes that the trend is generalizable due to the similarities in academic functioning between students with EBD and learning disabilities.

Ackerman (2007) reports that research has documented that students with emotional and behavioral disabilities perform more poorly than their peers on nearly every transition outcome (he cites Rylance, 1997, and Bullis, 2000). There are few differences in IQ and academic functioning level for students with EBD and LD, and noncategorical education practices would be most beneficial to students with these

disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1977; Sawka, McCurdy, & Manella, 2002). Students with disabilities have only a 35–45% chance of finding full-time work after leaving school. Ackerman (2007) reports, “The probability of future employment for students with disabilities decreases over time. For part- and full-time work combined, most studies report about a 60% employment level for persons with disabilities” (p. 328).

Houchins (1998) linked high levels of self-determination with student achievement and grade point average, demonstrating the relationship between self-determined youth and successful academic careers. A study conducted by Carter, Lane, Peirson, and Glaeser (2006) found that adolescents with EBD in this study were judged to have limited capacity to engage in self-determined behavior.

Carter et al. (2006) say that “future research is needed to examine the role that limited self-determination skills may play in contributing to the disappointing outcomes experienced by substantial numbers of youth with ED” (p. 340). These studies provide evidence of a relationship between increased self-determination skills and positive outcomes for students with disabilities. This researcher draws parallels between positive academic performance and successful postsecondary employment and independent living, thus improving overall quality of life.

Transition and Quality of Life

The construct of quality of life can be analyzed simultaneously with self-determination skills, further expanding on the rationale for self-determination skills training. In the Transition Summary (1991) from the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, transition is discussed as a time of stress and uncertainty for all teens, but especially for those with disabilities:

For youth with disabilities, there are often many additional questions and challenges. When young people with disabilities leave public school, the entitlement to special education and related services ends. They and their families leave behind a relatively organized service provider system and become solely responsible for identifying, pursuing, obtaining, and coordinating the educational training and services needed to prepare them for employment and independent living. (p. 4)

These monumental tasks are made even harder when the students are uncertain how to express desires, wants, and needs and advocate for themselves, as opposed to being dependent on family members and service providers.

Thoma, Nathanson, Baker, and Tamura (2002) discuss self-determination as the most important skill addressed in a transition plan. According to Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001), the most visible evidence of a focus on outcomes important to special education are contained in the IDEA transition services mandates requiring that students with disabilities be provided transition services that are outcome-oriented.

Research Related to Instruction of Self-Determination Skills

The need for self-determination skills among students with disabilities has been identified by numerous authors and illustrated in the review of the literature. Despite the importance placed on the self-determination, educators, administrators, and school personnel fall short of teaching and promoting the skills. The logical document to address deficit skill sets for a student with disabilities is the IEP. The IEP serves as a legal contract to address all goals agreed upon during the course of the IEP meetings.

Thoma et al. (2002), surveyed 43 special education teachers to determine their perceptions and skills in supporting and teaching self-determination skills to their students. The study did not report either the ages or the disability category of the students, or the grade level or setting of the teachers. The special education teachers

were asked if they developed goals related to self-determination for students. More than half responded that none for whom they were responsible had goals related to self-determination on their IEPs (58%), 7% said that two students had such goals, and 5% reported that five students had goals related to self-determination. In addition, when the same group of teachers were asked how feasible it was to introduce self-determination activities into the IEP process, 34% stated they were unsure how feasible it would be and that they had not tried to do so. In a similar study conducted by Mason et al. (2004), 31% of the respondents in the survey reported that they did not write self-determination goals into their students' IEPs. These statistics indicate that current practice is not aligned with current research. According to Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes (2000), promoting the self-determination of students with disabilities has become an essential component of many education and transition programs. Halloran (1993) noted that students' developing self-determination skills should be an educator's ultimate goal.

One strategy for accomplishing this "ultimate goal" is to actively involve students in their IEP meetings as well as in the process of achieving goals set during the meeting. In a review of studies conducted by Mason, Field, and Sawilowsky (2004), research published from 1994 to 2004 revealed that only 48–64% of students 14 years of age and older were attending their IEP meetings (deFur, Getzel, & Kregel, 1994; Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997; Trach & Sheldon, 2000). Williams and O'Leary (2000) found that one-third of the states were not in compliance with inviting students to the IEP meetings when transition issues were discussed. Furthermore, 26% of the states were not in compliance in ensuring that the interests and preferences of students would be considered in the development of the IEP.

In a study conducted by Johnson and Sharpe (2000), student attendance at the IEP meetings was on the rise, but active participation by the students in IEP meetings was often minimal. In the survey, administrators indicated that 79% of the time, teachers used assessments or represented the students' views at the IEP meetings as opposed to having students actively participate. The benefits of students actively participating in their IEP meetings were highlighted by Mason et al.—students who were more involved in their IEP process knew more about their accommodations (70%) and disabilities (60%) and were more assertive in asking for accommodations (59%). These benefits describe the skills of self-advocacy and self-determination. Students who are not only aware of their disability but are also assertive in asking for accommodations demonstrate a learned skill set, if only in one area: disability awareness.

Research on Student Participation in the IEP

IEP meetings consist of lengthy discussions and important decision-making regarding the upcoming year for a special education student. Although students are invited to attend this meeting up to age 16 (note that is the maximum age), many students are not familiar with the language, process, and overall purpose of the IEP meetings. In a study conducted by Lehman, Bassett, and Sands (1999), students who reported attending their IEP meetings without specific instruction reported that they did not know what to do, lacked understanding of the meeting's purpose or language, felt as though no one was listening to them when they spoke, and thought that attending the IEP meetings would be or were meaningless activities. In addition, Lehman et al. added that attending IEP meetings without training or instruction might actually cause more educational harm and result in more students becoming disillusioned with their formal education.

In a study conducted by Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2002), junior, middle, and high school special education students and IEP participants were surveyed. The study surveyed 1,638 participants in 393 IEP meetings over three consecutive academic years, but did not collect student age, disability category, or meeting topics, in an effort to ensure confidentiality. Analysis of the data yielded that students reported knowing the reasons for the IEP meeting, what they needed to do, and what was said at the meetings significantly less than all other participants. This study supports the notion that simply inviting a student to sit in the room during an IEP meeting while fulfilling the letter of the law fails to meet the intent of the law or best practices. Mason, Field, and Sawilowsky (2004) found that students were not very involved in their IEP processes, and were much more likely to attend their meetings but not participate. Survey results revealed that respondents involved in IEP meetings simply attended the meetings and played a much more passive role, rather than actively participating in the process. Only 28% of respondents indicated that students received instruction or guidance prior to the IEP meeting; and, even when prepared, it consisted of as little as one to three hours of preparation. This research indicates that, like new educators, students need to be active members of the team and require training and exposure.

Research on Self-Determination and Goal Attainment

Self-determination is defined as the ability to identify and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself. Goal attainment is an important element of self-determination. Individuals who can set and reach goals must first be able to identify the means of reaching goals, breaking apart the tasks, and maintaining focus over a period of time. Through developing self-determination skills, students will be better

equipped to become and remain active participants in their own lives. Wehmeyer (1994) considers goal attainment as the most important self-determination component. Yet, youth who receive special education services possess far fewer goal attainment and other self-determination skills than do secondary general-education students who are not disabled (Martin, Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994).

Martin et al. further state that active goal setting may assist in aiding the individual with finding and feeling a sense of purpose. In addition, self-directed goal setting might facilitate improved performance (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Deno, 1985; Martin & Bandura, 1997; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Zimmerman, 1996). Goal setting facilitates performance increases because goals specify the requirements for success and prompt self-monitoring toward the desired outcome (Martin, Smith, & Nelson, 1997). In turn, goals impact performance because they influence the steps that are taken to achieve the goals as well as the amount of effort and attention put forth to reach the goals. According to Fuchs et al. (1997), students with disabilities are not prepared to set and attain goals without specific training and modeling.

Self-determination studies reveal positive results for individuals with disabilities who acquire the skill set. For example, Jones (2006) states that students benefited greatly by vision planning. Students found it motivating to begin thinking about and articulating their hopes and dreams for the future. As a result, students became enthused (many for the first time) about the possibilities that lay ahead and began taking steps toward reaching them. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) surveyed youth one year post-graduation and found that youth who had scored higher on the self-determination measures were working and earning more money than their peers with lower self-determination scores.

Mason et al.'s (2004) research results suggest that youth who are involved in the IEP development or related educational goal setting and planning are more likely to (a) achieve their goals, (b) improve their academic skills, (c) develop important self-advocacy and communication skills, and (d) graduate from high school. Self-determination increases the academic performance of college students with disabilities and is considered key to success even in postsecondary education (Field, Sarver, & Shaw, 2003).

A study conducted by Sarver (2000) investigated the relationship between self-determination and academic success for students with a learning disability enrolled at a major university. The researcher administered a self-determination rating scale to the participants, and the assessment yielded a composite self-determination score for each of them. This score represented a quantitative measure of the extent to which each student was self-determined. The self-determination score then was compared to each participant's grade point average (GPA) at the time of the study, which was considered as a measure of each participant's academic success. The results showed a significant and positive relationship between the student's self-determination score and GPA. The conclusion was that students who are more self-determined seem to enjoy better academic achievements in postsecondary education. Vallerand, Fortier, and Guay (1997) found that students with self-determined motivation were more likely to hold intentions to stay in school, and ultimately did remain in school, in contrast to their peers with lower self-determined motivation, whose intentions to leave school were later acted upon. In a study review of self-determination literature conducted by Malian and Nevin (2002), the

authors concluded that self-determination is a predictor of successful transition to adult life.

The research trends demonstrate the need and success of students with disabilities when they are taught self-determination. The method of teaching this skill set can be accomplished in a variety of ways, and often involves a packaged curriculum or writing IEP goals and objectives targeting the desired skill set. For the purpose of this research study, “ChoiceMaker” curriculum is examined as a means for teaching EBD students’ self-determination through goal attainment.

Research on Curriculum for Teaching Self-Determination Skills

This section explores curricula that are designed to teach self-determination skills to students with varying disability and age categories. As part of the Self-Determination Synthesis Project (SDSP) Test, Karvonen, Wood, Browder, and Algozzine (2000) conducted a review of available self-determination curricula and the benefits of components addressed of the eight self-determination components. The project was completed with the support of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education with the intent of gathering information and offering a format that would allow educators and service providers an overview of curricula available. The eight components analyzed within each curriculum were (a) choice/decision-making; (b) goal setting/attainment; (c) problem-solving; (d) self-evaluation, observation, and reinforcement; (e) self-advocacy; (f) inclusion of student-directed individualized education programs (IEP); (g) relationships with others; and (h) self-awareness. The research referenced was gathered by the authors of each specific program and was not a result of the article by Test et al. (2000).

Next, Student Transition and Educational Planning (S.T.E.P)(2000), incorporated five of the eight components but did not include problem-solving, relationship, and self-awareness. The curriculum was field tested and targeted for transition-aged students with and without disabilities and at-risk youth. Self-Advocacy Strategy for Education and Transition Planning (1995) incorporated five of the eight components but did not incorporate goal setting, problem-solving, self-evaluation, and relationships. The curriculum was field tested and targeted for primary and secondary students with disabilities and at-risk youth. Take Charge for the Future (2001) incorporated six of the eight components but did not include the problem-solving and core relationship components. This curriculum has been field tested and targeted for sophomore and junior students with disabilities.

Whose Future Is It Anyway (1995) incorporated six of the components, not including problem-solving and relationships. The curriculum was field tested and is targeted for students in middle school or transitional age who have mild to moderate cognitive, learning, or developmental disabilities. The “ChoiceMaker” (1999) curriculum meets four of the eight self-determination categories but does not include problem-solving, IEP plan, self-advocacy, relationships, or self-awareness. The curriculum has been field tested, but the targeted audience is not specified, leaving this researcher to draw the conclusion that the curriculum is appropriate and adaptable for multiple ages and disabilities. All of the five highlighted curriculums proved effective during the field tests. This researcher chose to use the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum because of the concentration on goal setting and attainment and the broad target audience.

Research on the “ChoiceMaker” Curriculum

“ChoiceMaker” is a curriculum that was developed by Marshall et al. in 1999. It provides educators with an in-depth curriculum to target self-determination skills through a three-step process. The first step is goal setting, the second is expressing goals, and the third is taking action. The curriculum comprises an assessment, lessons, and then a post-assessment evaluation to assist educators and students in gauging the growth made during the process. There are seven lessons, and they incorporate the skills a student needs to break down a goal and begin working toward meeting and maintaining the goal.

Two studies have examined the effectiveness of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum for students with disabilities. German, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2000) examined the effectiveness using the curriculum with six adolescents with mild to moderate disabilities. The teacher wrote goals for each student on goal cards which were taken directly from their IEP. During phase one of the study, students were asked to choose a goal each day to work on, but were given no instruction. Over a three-week period, “Take Action” lessons (Jerman & Martin in 2000) were added to the daily routine, and the students continued to pick daily goals. Then, with teacher and paraprofessional observation, the team decided whether, at the end of each day, the student had met the designated goal. Maintenance was judged by a student’s ability to consistently meet the goal over a six-day period with no prompts or reminders. Results revealed that the Take Action curriculum lesson package produced an increase of goals attained for all six students. According to Jerman et al.,

The results suggest that the Take Action instructional program clearly improved the six students’ daily goal attainment performance. During baseline, students seldom attained their goals and, after the introduction of the Take Action process,

students learned to accomplish their daily goals. These gains maintained when the students continued to use the Take Action forms, and instructional procedures were withdrawn. (p. 7)

While the N size of above-mentioned study was small, success was demonstrated and further research was advocated for studies using larger groups and varying disabilities.

A second study was completed with the same curriculum using college-age students in a major university. Walden (2002) completed the study following five college students through the process of the curriculum and mastery of the chosen goals. This research was conducted in two phases and consisted of two assessments as pre- and post-determinants of generalized behaviors—the Self-Determination Knowledge Scale and the AIR Self-Determination Scale. As a whole, the group experienced success after the intervention was phased out and a six- to nine-month window had passed. Although the achievement was not universal for each student, more than 80% of the group did see an increase in scores and self-determination abilities. (Note: While the N size of above-mentioned study was small, success was demonstrated, and further research was advocated for studies using larger groups and varying disabilities.)

These two studies provide areas for further research. German et al. (2000) recommend the following:

1. Research needs to be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the regular Take Action format to teach attainment of long-term goals.
2. Research is needed to further validate the Take Action process, research is needed to determine if other groups of students will benefit, including those with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and those without disabilities.

3. Research is needed to be determine if the Take Action process will work across other types of goals, both short and long term.
4. Research is needed to determine if the Take Action process was designed to be taught to students with and without disabilities. Research should also be undertaken to determine if the Take Action process can be successfully taught in an inclusive academic environment to students with and without disabilities.

Walden (2002) recommends that future research include varying disability categories and age groups. Both of these studies provide the platform for the proposed research. The “ChoiceMaker” curriculum has been validated as effective to varying degrees in small-sample studies with both mild to moderate adolescents and college-age students with varying mild disabilities.

Summary

The long-term benefits of self-determination skills on students with EBD is a new area of research, and the limitations it presents include the lack of literature on the benefits of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum. A disproportionate amount of the literature focuses on the damaging effects of a lack of self-determination skills and the lack of involvement of students in their IEP meetings. The gap is extensive in relation to research-based literature that demonstrates the positive effects of possessing self-determination skills, as it is a relatively new research field. As illustrated throughout this review, the statistics illustrate the problems of students’ failure to develop self-determination skills and their failure to participate in their educational and related

planning. Students are less successful in postsecondary outcomes, as demonstrated by Wehmeyer et al. (1997), and the areas studied—employment, rate of pay, and living arrangements. The aim of special education is to give students with disabilities the chance to gain access to curricula and other opportunities, just as their nondisabled peers. This literature review explored the current status of skill acquisition in students and pay particular attention to the need to prepare students who can function successfully in society with as little assistance as necessary.

In addition, the literature that describes the negative effects on students with disabilities who do not possess self-determination skills is abundant. However, there is a large literature gap in literature demonstrating the positive effects of self-determination skills in students with disabilities. Wehmeyer et al. (1994) present one of the few longitudinal studies that clearly depict the long-term benefits of self-determination skills among students with disabilities. Thus, there is a great need to demonstrate the benefits of self-determination in students with disabilities specifically having EBD.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Field and Hoffman (1994) defined self-determination as the ability to identify and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself. Individuals with higher levels of self-determination can readily muster behavioral resources for autonomous action and self-regulation along with internal affective resources of self-realization and psychological empowerment to accomplish their personal goals (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998; Zimmerman, 2002). As stated in the review of the literature, students with disabilities often lack self-determination skills and experience a low level of goal attainment. The “ChoiceMaker” curriculum was developed to target these specific skills in students with disabilities and has been studied using adolescents and college students with learning disabilities. Both studies called for further research with different disability categories and age groups. Using an ideographic qualitative study through participant observation, document collection, and an open-ended survey, data was collected over a three-month period. The research was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Was “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self-determination skills to EBD students in a private separate day setting?
 - a. Did students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills was provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum
2. Did the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal-achievement process?

- a. Did an increase in student responsibility promote goal attainment?
- b. Did an increase in student awareness of IEP goals promote IEP progress (as noted by mastery of specific IEP goals and objectives)?

The study explored the effectiveness of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum for teaching self-determination skills and engaging students in the goal-achievement process. The study explored the process of student responsibility-taking, student process in IEP goals, and development of self-determination skills.

Epistemology for the Research

The single-subject design refers to a single unit of analysis, which is the individual, that was applied to a group. As a form of ideographic research (understanding the individual), single-subject designs involve the close monitoring of the impact of an intervention on individuals. The close monitoring allows the researcher to identify the point at which improvement or change occurs and to examine the factors that are associated with that change (Engel & Schutt 2005). This method was appropriate for studying the research problem because it allowed a deeper understanding of what was happening with the individual.

This study obtained as much useful data as possible to determine the attitudes and comfort levels of the students during the study. A strictly quantitative approach may have yielded numerical representations but would not have provided insight into why the students made decisions or what actions were observable during the study. A mixed method using both qualitative and quantitative data was impossible to complete during the available time period. The study was conducted using small groups, which change topics every other month. The purpose for utilizing the group time is so the student’s

routine is not deviated from in any way. Therapy groups took place weekly and the students were acclimated to this system. This choice minimized stress and allowed for a continuation of the normal daily schedule. The research included interviews, participant observation, document collection, and an open-ended survey for staff members observing the students.

Design

To determine the effectiveness of the Take Action lessons, this research employed a single-subject design in which the subject served as his/her own control. The study used a multiple-baseline design, which simultaneously measures two or more behaviors, subjects, or settings in order to identify a pretreatment (baseline) level. The baseline data described the current level of performance and can be used to predict future performance. If each student baseline changes when the intervention is introduced, the effects can be attributed to the intervention. Advantages of multiple-baseline designs include the following: (a) the multiple-baseline designs are effective means of evaluating educational procedures because they allow continuous monitoring; (b) intervention is applied to only one or two baselines at a time; (c) large numbers of subjects are not needed; (d) the gradual application of the intervention permits the researcher to test its effectiveness on a small scale and make needed modifications; and (e) establishing a causal relationship does not require the complete withdrawal of treatment (Harvey, May, & Kennedy, 2004).

Following the intervention, a partial-withdrawal design to assess maintenance was utilized. This entailed removing components of the intervention as opposed to discontinuing the intervention completely. The use of this withdrawal procedure was an attempt to maximize student success (Walden, 2000). With the partial-withdrawal

design, some, but not all, intervention components are removed to determine whether acquired gains are maintained.

Research Procedures

Time Line

The research study was originally slated to begin second semester and end with the last day of school. Given the length of time it took to receive the students consent form, the time line had to be moved and the study began in April 28, 2008 and ended in July 31, 2008. This meant the study had a two week break from June 16- 30th 2008 prior to the start of the summer session. This was an unforeseen circumstance, and the research team offered a review session for students to account for the break.

Start Date	Hiatus Dates	End Date	Total # of Days	Baseline	Intervention Phase 1	Intervention Phase 2	Maintenance
April 28, 2008	June 16- June 30, 2008	July 31, 2008	58 school days = 13 weeks	10 school days = 2 weeks	20 school days= 4 weeks	10 days= 2 weeks	25 school days= 5 weeks

Research Staff:

Research staff was comprised of the school social work staff, clinical director and classroom teacher and assistant in the two classrooms the research took place in. The staff completed the IRB mandatory training but also participated in a seminar run by the writer on “ChoiceMaker” curriculum and the proper way to introduce, teach and follow up within the scope of the curriculum. These trainings provided the basis for the research staff, to ensure continuity, consistency and fairness within the research project while also

serving to build the confidence level of the research staff to implement the new curriculum.

Participants

Participants were selected on the criteria of attendance, age, and the need for self-determination training. The need for self-determination training is based upon the student's school and classroom placement. This classroom placement is decided upon at the students IEP meeting which consists of parent, teachers, social workers, school administrator and a public school representative. Although these students are diploma bound students, their needs require a more restrictive placement than the school's high school program. The high school program has multiple transitions because the students change classes every forty two minutes. The students chosen for this project were unable to tolerate the multiple transitions and are serviced in a self-contained classroom where the teachers rotate. These students received even less of an opportunity for choice making and goal setting because their classroom placement is very sheltered. The classroom placement is necessary for the optimum opportunity for success due to behaviors and difficulty with transitions. The school social contacted each participant's guardian to explain the study, the potential benefits and the relevant details including: duration, goals, timeline and to obtain signed consent (see Appendix 1 Consent form).

Name of Student/Gender	Age	Primary Label/IQ	Academic Functioning	Behavior
Jake/male	16	EBD/60	Reading/Writing - 2-3 grade level	Displays aggression when frustrated
Mark/male	17	MR/<60	Reading/Writing - 3-5 grade level	Displays severe aggression towards staff and students
John/male	17	EBD/LD/>70	Reading/Writing - 2-3 grade level	Difficulty with anxiety which can lead to self-injurious behavior
Jen/female	16	EBD/>70	Reading/Writing - 3 rd grade	Not aggressive
Samantha/female	20	EBD/MR/<60	Reading/Writing 1-2 grade level	Not aggressive, can be easily distracted
Tanya	15	EBD/<60	Reading/Writing - 3-4 grade level	Often misreads social cues and can become aggressive

Setting

The setting is a private separate day school located in Maryland. The school is primarily made up of students with a primary disability label of EBD and learning disabilities as documented on their IEP in the disability category section. The school provides services for approximately 50 students ranging in age from 11 to 21 in middle school and high school programs. The students are offered academic and vocational classes in support of either a Maryland High School Diploma or a Certificate of

Completion. The school has been accredited by the Maryland State Department of Education and the National Association of Private Special Education Centers, and has been since the school was founded in 1997. It has approximately 20 teachers, 15 teacher's assistants, 4 social workers, and 3 administrators. The school runs on a 10-month schedule with extended school year services, which are decided on an individual basis for each student at the student's annual IEP meeting. Class sizes are no larger than 9, maintaining a 6:1 ratio at all times. Groups are held daily and are a major component of the overall school program. The school was chosen due to the unique program called the "hybrid" program. This program allows students who require the structure of a self-contained room but still require the subject area expertise of high school teachers. The students remain in one room all day with a special educator and an assistant teacher while subject area teachers rotate in and out. Students accrue the necessary credits towards graduation but at a smaller rate than that of the students in the high school program. On average it takes these students 6 years to graduate as opposed to the 4 year progression most of their peers experience.

"ChoiceMaker" Curriculum

The "ChoiceMaker" (Huber Marshall et al., 1999) lesson package was designed to systematically teach students a process to attain their own goals by using a model-lead-test approach. A videotape presents the model in student-friendly language, with young actors and music to peak and keep participant interest. The keystone self-determination concept is goal attainment. Educators use the Take Action lessons to teach students the crucial skills for attaining their goals. The lesson package consists of a student videotape,

teacher lessons plans, and student worksheets. Students learn to break their long-term goals into short-term goals that can be accomplished in a short time period. Lessons teach students to plan how they will attain their goals by deciding a standard for goal performance: (a) a means to get performance feedback; (b) what motivates them to do it; (c) the strategies they will use; (d) needed supports; and (e) schedules. This plan leads to student action, evaluation, and adjustment.

The targeted format teaches students how to accomplish their long-term goals. It consists of eight lessons and typically takes 8 to 10 hours of instruction across two to three weeks. Students learn to first break their long-range goal into smaller, reachable, specific or short-term steps that can be accomplished in a week. Next, the students answer six questions to establish a plan: (a) Standard: What will I be satisfied with; (b) Feedback: How will I get feedback on my performance; (c) Motivation: Why do I want to do this; (d) Strategy: What methods will I use; (e) Support: What help do I need; and (f) Schedule: When will I do it? At the end of a week, students answer a set of evaluation questions and then make any needed adjustment in the six parts of the plan or with the goal itself.

Baseline: Goal Selection and Attainment Without Instruction

The following intervention model was adapted from research conducted by Jerman and Martin in 2000, titled the *Take Action: Making Goals Happen* instructional package.

Baseline data was collected following the example provided in the German (2000) article for a total of two weeks. Students were exposed to the process of tracking goals

but did not receive any training on how to attain a goal. Prior to the commencement of the study, research staff wrote all of the students' socio-emotional IEP objectives on index cards. The socio-emotional goals were chosen instead of academic goals to ensure that academic functioning was not related to the success rate. Academic functioning levels varied from student to student, this writer felt it important to use goals and objectives which did not include academics. This writer wanted to ensure that results generated were not adversely affected by academic functioning levels.

At the start of each study, the students chose three objectives from their IEP. (For the purpose of this study, the cards are referred to as goal cards.) At the start of each week the students independently read their stack of cards and chose three to address during that school week. The students had one full school week to attain their goals. During the day, students received no instruction, prompts, or feedback on achieving their goals. At the end of the school week, the teacher combined observations with those of the student, paraprofessional, and other teachers to determine if the students accomplished their goals. The teacher then provided feedback for the students on whether or not they accomplished their goal. Any attained goal was removed from the choices for two weeks and then replaced back into the choice list.

Dependent Measure

Each participant set a goal of how many goal cards he or she felt they could accomplish in a week. The dependent measure was expressed by the number of weekly goals the student accomplished within the study time-frame of approximately two months.

Procedures for Implementing Intervention

The following intervention model was adapted from research conducted by Jerman and Martin in 2000, which is called the *Take Action: Making Goals Happen* instructional package. Each participant set a goal of how many goal cards he or she feels can be accomplished in a week. The dependent measure was expressed by the number of weekly goals the students accomplished within the study time-frame, which is approximately two months.

1. Baseline: Occurred for a two-week period in which all participants were given their IEP goals on index cards. Each participant chose three goals to meet that week. No assistance was provided in the form of feedback, goal setting, or steps to achieve the goal. At the end of the week each student had a conference with the teacher and paraprofessional and a group decision was made on the progress of each of the goals previously chosen. Data was recorded, and if the team feels that the child met the goal(s) then those will not be added back into the pile for the following week.
2. Intervention Phase 1: Occurred for a four-week period. Take Action lessons were added to the baseline procedures to teach weekly goal attainment. First, students were taught these lessons during eight 45-minute classes. During the first class, students completed a series of activities to learn the four steps of the Take Action process: (a) plan, (b) act, (c) evaluate, and (d) adjust. During the second class, two students watched the Take Action video, which depicts a group of high

school students using this process to accomplish their goals. The teacher also taught the three plan components: (a) strategy, (b) scheduling, and (c) support. In the third class, the students interactively reviewed sample plans, wrote practice plans, and developed plans to accomplish their own goals. In the fifth class, students learned evaluation strategies to determine if their strategy, support, and schedule achieved their goal. If not, students learned to adjust their plan parts to attain their goals. Students in the fifth class wrote their own plans to accomplish goals. The sixth class demonstrated how to evaluate and adjust plans, and class seven concentrated on using the Take Action process.

3. Intervention Phase 2: Following instruction, students practiced using the Take Action process to attain their weekly goals for up to two weeks. Students completed their Take Action plans with teacher prompts and feedback and then worked on attaining their goals, while they received teacher prompts and feedback. At the end of the week, the students completed the evaluation and adjustment sections with teacher support, instruction, and feedback.
4. Maintenance: Occurred for five-week period. With two students at a time, intervention components were withdrawn except praise for goal attainment. At the beginning of the school week, students picked three goals from their choices and then completed their plan forms. If needed, the teacher assisted in reading and writing the plan

components. Following completion of the planning forms, no other prompts or feedback were given. Likewise, students received no instruction or prompts on their goal-attainment performance during the week. After completing the evaluation and adjustment sections at the end of each week, the teacher verbally praised goal attainment. Unlike the intervention phase, students will not receive guided practice during the day. The teacher reduced feedback at the end of the day to simple verbal praise when students attain their goals.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection included student and staff interviews, data and document collection, and the open-ended questionnaire. Student Interviews: Student participants were given a pre- and post-survey to develop a deeper level of understanding into their decision-making process (see Appendix B.) Staff Interviews: School staff members who worked with the six individuals were given pre- and post interviews to determine a baseline and growth level for the intervention. Data/Document Collection took place using Pre- and Post evaluations (see Appendix C) and IEP documents to note current level of progress. The Open-Ended Questionnaire is a post-questionnaire to ask the effectiveness of the program and provide feedback on structure of the intervention. A team based approach was used in gathering data. The research team consisted of the classroom teacher, the assistant and the school social worker. These three team members conducted observations, and discussed the student's progress at the end of the day. This allowed for a comprehensive view of the student's progress through out the study. The

team made the decision if the child had met the goal and used classroom observation as well as the daily point sheet to track and rate progress.

Data Analysis:

The results of the pre- and post-interviews and tests were examined in conjunction with the percentage of the goals met throughout the study. Students and staff members' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum were examined with success the student's rate of goal attainment. The student's goal-attainment rates were calculated using percentages to provide statistical data for the use of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum as a tool to teach self-determination skills and goal attainment to students with EBD. The calculations are in addition to the team based discussions regarding the individual student progress.

Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

Potential Risks

Potential risks to participants in the study were addressed and are minimized due to the infrastructure of the school day and the normalcy of small groups targeting specific skill sets. Each student attending the school is placed in a small group for a 45-minute period each day. Participants in the study followed this model and have been identified as needing self-determination skill training through his or her classroom placement.

Consent

Each student had a consent form signed by a parent or guardian prior to commencement of the study. Consent was not granted over the telephone and was the

result of a signature, which was kept on file in the student's cumulative notebook as well as in the research documentation. (Appendix D)

Confidentiality

All participants were referred to using pseudonyms, and all documents were stored in a locked secure storage facility onsite.

Avoiding Bias

In order to avoid researcher bias, the consent for participation was gained from social workers who work with these families on a weekly basis. Each social worker attended training sessions as required by the IRB forum. The observations and teaching of the content was conducted by teachers and paraprofessionals who attended trainings not only on the study itself, but also as required by IRB. The researcher provided technical support through consultation with teachers, social workers, and paraprofessionals. The researcher met weekly on a formal basis and informally multiple times to discuss the progress of the students, and ensure that the rating of the students' progress was fair and commensurate across the entire cohort.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum with EBD high school students in a private separate day setting. The study sought to understand how student direct involvement and responsibility taking for goal achievement affected their progress on IEP goals and enhanced self-determination skills.

Research Questions

This research explored the following questions:

1. Is “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self-determination skills to EBD students in a private separate day setting?
 - c. Do students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills is provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum?
2. How does the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal-achievement process?
 - d. Does an increase in student responsibility promote goal attainment?
 - e. Does an increase in student awareness of IEP goals promote IEP progress (as noted by mastery of specific IEP goals and objectives)?

The research took place over a 13 week period in a self contained classroom for students with EBD, who were educated in a private separate day setting.

The following intervention model is adapted from research conducted by Jerman and Martin in 2000, which is called the *Take Action: Making Goals Happen* instructional package. Each participant chose three goal cards to work on during the week and also set

a personal goal of how many goals out of the three chosen he or she felt could be met in the week. The dependent measure was the number of goals accomplished within the study time frame, was approximately two months.

Phase 1- Baseline

During the first two weeks of the study, students were directed to choose IEP goals to work on but were given no instruction on how to meet the goal. Each student chose three goals to work on throughout the week and the goal was tracked by research staff though out the week. Goals that were met were removed from the student's choices for the following week. This accommodation was made because students presented crisis behaviors when faced with the paperwork provided in the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum. For example, as recorded on the school wide behavioral tracking system, students exhibited non-compliant behavior including throwing paper and pencil, leaving the assigned location and also became verbally aggressive. Therefore a single tracking form was created to assist students in tracking their goals. Additionally, after week one the number of goal options were reduced from three to two, in an attempt to lower behaviors demonstrated by the students when they became overwhelmed by the task of tracking and completing three goals per week.

Phase 2 Intervention

The students were then exposed to the "Take Action Curriculum" which consisted of seven lessons on goal attainment during a four week period. Students continued their goal tracking, and providing the dependant measure which consisted of determining how many goals they believed they could meet over the four week period. During this phase, research staff was able to offer prompts, reminders and assistance to

the students as they worked to reach their goals on a daily basis. A second accommodation was needed. The original plan was to use the “Take Action” lesson plans that were not modified, however it became evident after two lessons that the cognitive ability of the students combined with the amount of writing on each worksheet was inhibiting the ability of the students to make progress. The research staff met and decided to use the modified lessons provided by the publisher. This change both increased participation with the student group and decreased problem behaviors which had been evident during the first two lessons. The second modification that the research team made to aide in the success of the students was a modified version of the publishers “Plan of Action” form. This was necessary because of the complexity of the form presented in the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum.

Phase 3 Maintenance

Occurred over a four week period and involved the students writing plans for each of the two established goals and then working to meet the goals. As predicted, students required assistance writing their plans, but did not require reminders to continually work on their goals. The maintenance period occurred after a three week break in school session. Research staff observed that the students demonstrated difficulty in the routine of picking and working on goals, therefore a review of how to write the plan was conducted on the first day back from the break.

Descriptions of Participating Students-

The description of participating students is organized by disability, academic functioning level and behavior characteristics. The results are then organized in three categories that are aligned with the research questions:

- (a) effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills;
- (b) promoting the engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process;
- (c) increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.

In addition, data was collected from a student interview in which students were asked open ended questions regarding their knowledge and personal experiences surrounding goal setting and attainment in relationship to their IEP. Data was also collected from a staff survey in which staff were asked to rate the students on a 1-10 scale. These scale scores were then converted into percentages.

Student 1: Jake

Jake is a 16 year old male student with emotional disturbance and his IQ as recorded from the WISC is below 60. His daily academic functioning levels are at the second to third grade level reading and writing as recorded from informal assessments and classroom observation. His behavior vacillates between agitated and aggressive outbursts to being extremely eager to please. He is willing to work until the actual task is presented at which point he often demonstrates non compliant or refusal behavior, as documented on the behavior management data system, Jake is only partially aware of societal norms related to forming and maintaining, as noted in his relationships and his

behavior is often the source of his difficulties with peers, staff and all those he interacts with.

Reaction to study:

Jake's initial reaction to the study was positive and he was pleased to participate. However, he was one of the first to show difficulty with the non-modified lessons during the instructional period and had difficulty writing his plan independently.

Behavior Concerns that impacted the study: The following information was gathered using the school wide behavior management tracking system, and classroom observations. As the study progressed, Jake became more frustrated with the paperwork; therefore he was provided a scribe in an attempt to alleviate any stress associated with the academic demands of the study. He was extremely agitated when the team decided he had not met a goal, requiring staff to discuss the results with him two hours prior to dismissal in order for behaviors to subside and a smooth transition for departure.

Baseline:

During the baseline two week period, Jake met one goal in week one and zero goals in week 2.

Student Interview Results:

Jake's responses to the student interview illustrated that he was aware of the definition and meaning of a goal. He was also aware of how to set a goal and meet goals independently. He reported that he had set and attained set goals before. Furthermore, he reported understanding the purpose of his IEP document and that he had been successful in meeting some of the goals documented on his IEP. When asked what people had been most helpful in assisting him to meet goals previously in his life, he reported his

Department of Social Services case manager, his teacher and his school social worker. He also was able to report some of the IEP goals he had set and that he believed that he had met during the study. These included, developing coping skills and controlling anger.

Staff Assessment of Skills:

Staff reported Jake's abilities were as follows on a scale of 100%: 60% ability to choose goals, a 40% ability to express goals and a 65% ability to take action in response to a goal being set.

Interpretations of Results for Student 1:

This student had a higher view of his abilities than the staff did. During the intervention, Jake averaged 0 goals met. He had two weeks of meeting one goal out of three per week and then 6 weeks of no progress, however each week he estimated that he could meet all 3 goals chosen. Jake had significant behavioral episodes which resulted in removal from the classroom and a loss of instructional time and when he was present for the "ChoiceMaker" lessons, he did not focus on his IEP goal attainment after the initial baseline period, which took place prior to the three week school break. Research and classroom staff attributes his lack of visible progress to the change in routine of summer session and did not feel it was an inability to perform the goals nor a problem with comprehending instruction. Furthermore, Jake absorbed the project language and would often ask other students if they had accomplished their goal and how many did they feel they could meet that week. He demonstrated a competitive edge and a desire to succeed but struggled to initiate the tasks set forth in his action plan.

Research Questions Examined in relation to student 1:

a. *Effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills:*

Jake's progress did not yield results which support the hypothesis that the curriculum would assist in teaching students with emotional and behavioral disabilities self-determination skills. Jake did not increase his progress during the intervention phase of the study. He met one goal week one and zero goals week two. During the intervention phase he mastered one goal during week four. After week four, Jake did not master any goals.

b. *Promoting engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process:*

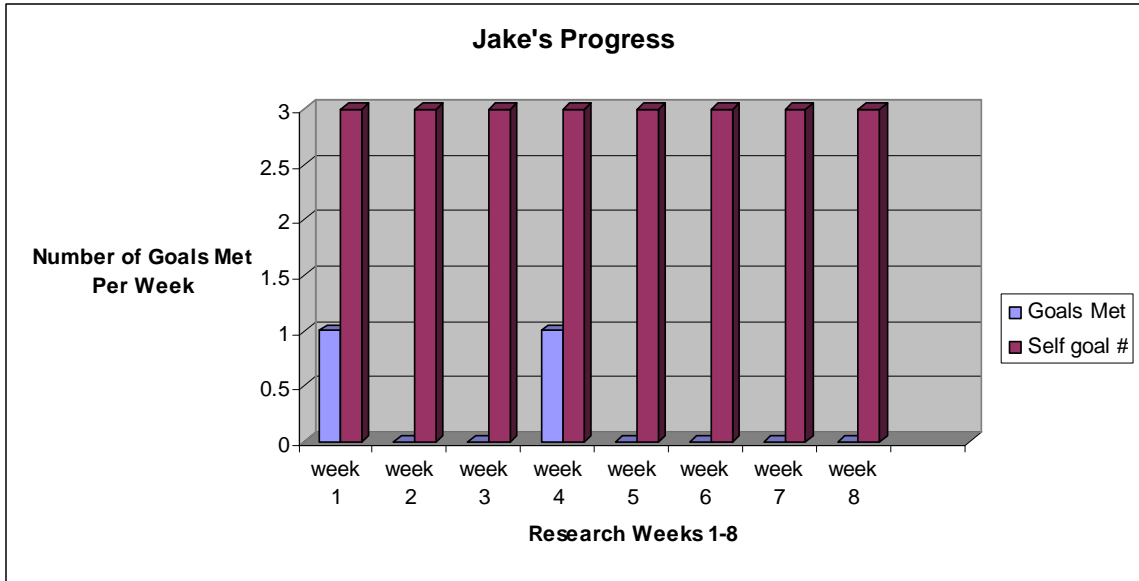
Jake's use of the study vocabulary and his view of competition for which goals were mastered by his peers suggests that the curriculum aided in promoting engagement in the IEP goal achievement process. Jake's interfering behaviors precluded his success in this study.

c. *Increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.*

Jake's progress on goal attainment did not increase as a result of direct instruction but the research team and classroom staff felt that this was due to his interfering behaviors.

Table 3. Jake's Progress on IEP Goal Attainment by Week

The following table illustrates Jake's progress per week and the number of goals he met during phase of the study coupled with the number of goals she set for herself to meet per week.



The data shows that Jake attained one goal during week one and one goal during week four and did not attain any other goals during the project. This also table also illustrates that for Jake the various phases did not influence his progress.

Student 2: Mark

Mark is a 17 year old male with emotional disturbance, his IQ as recorded from the WISC is below 60, placing him in the MR category. His daily academic functioning levels are third to late fifth grade level reading and writing as documented by informal assessments. His behavior is severely aggressive towards staff and students. He is extremely socially aware and is resentful of being categorized as a person with a disability and of his school placement. He feels he should be in public school setting. Mark is capable of forming relationships with peers and staff but struggles to maintain those relationships due to his behavioral outbursts. Mark struggles with episodes of bullying peers and attempting to manipulate staff. He often is caught not following the school wide code of conduct.

Reaction to the study:

Mark averaged 1.375 goals met per week but had 4 weeks of no progress. His classroom staff and research staff met to discuss the disparity and it was determined that he had chosen extremely easy goals during the baseline period and that week two, a goal which had been met week 1 had been accidentally placed back in the stack of choices. Classroom staff assisted him when he chose his goals for the rest of the study and he experienced more reasonable results. Each week Mark predicted that he would meet two of the three goals. When questioned as to why two, he reported that he felt it was the middle and therefore he wasn't aiming too high but also was not "selling himself short". Behavioral concerns that impacted the study: Mark had multiple acts of aggression which result in removal from the classroom and a loss of instructional time.

Baseline:

During the baseline period Mark met two goals week one and two goals week 2. Research staff disagreed with the progress noted on both weeks 1 and 2, during observations Mark was noted not to have not met his set goals on multiple occasions during baseline, but the tracking forms yielded differing outcomes than the observers.

Student Interview Results:

His responses to the interview questions revealed that he knew what a goal was, how to set and meet it and had done in the past. He listed examples such as getting good grades, making honor roll and playing on the varsity sports teams. He also reported understanding what his IEP was and having met some of his IEP goals while actively working on the rest.

Staff Assessment of Skills:

During the staff assessment, staff agreed with Mark and reported he had a 90% ability to choose goals, 60% ability at expressing goals and an 80% ability to take action after identifying goals

Interpretations of Results for Student 2:

During the intervention, Mark's progress vacillated. He mastered one goal during week one of baseline and then two goals during week two of baseline. He did well during week one of the intervention but then did not continue his progress. He exhibited non compliance and did not complete the necessary tasks for three weeks during the intervention phase. He then rebounded during the maintenance phase and reached two goals per week. Mark struggled to maintain his focus and the disparity of progress between research and classroom staff frustrated Mark. It was due to this frustration that he shut down and refused to participate. At the close of the study it was not clear to what extent Mark would generalize the newly acquired skills.

Research Questions Examined in relation to student 2:

a. Effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills:

Mark's progress yielded results which support the hypothesis that the curriculum would assist in teaching students with emotional and behavioral disabilities self-determination skills. Mark increased his progress during the maintenance phase of the study. He met one goal week one and three goals week two. During the intervention phase he had three weeks of no progress due to behavioral issues. During the maintenance phase he did extremely well and demonstrated mastery of skills.

b. Promoting engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process:

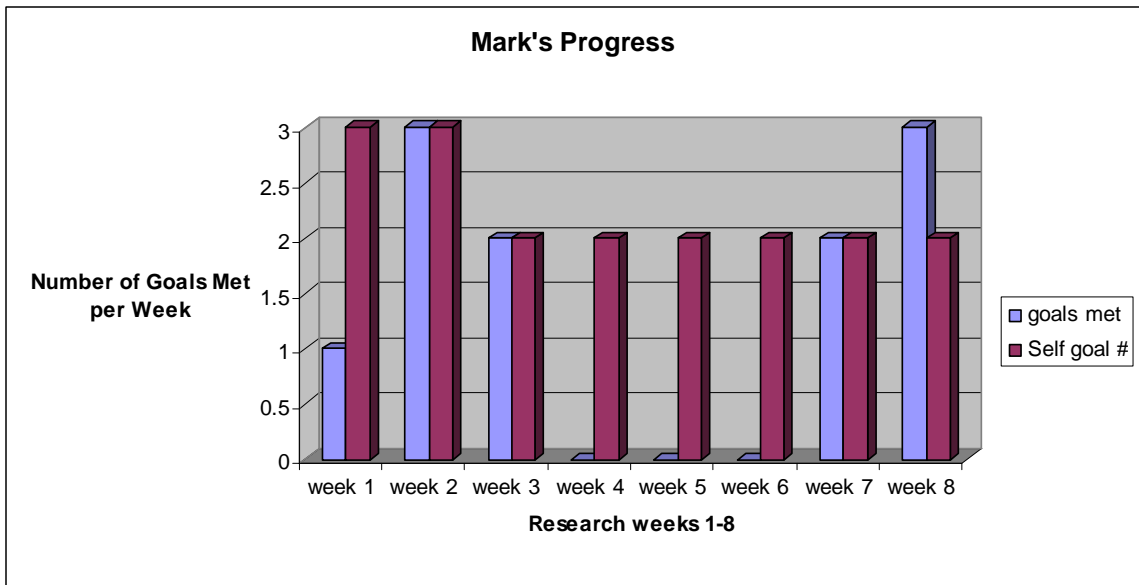
Mark’s progress during the maintenance phase supports the hypothesis that “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promoted the engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process.

c. Increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.

Mark’s progress during the maintenance phase was noted and although he had three weeks of no progress, he did increase goal attainment with the direct instruction thus supporting the hypothesis.

Table 4. Mark’s Progress on IEP goal attainment by Week:

The following chart illustrates Mark’s progress on IEP goal attainment per week coupled with the number of goals he set for himself to meet per week.



The data shows that Mark attained one goal during week one and three goals during week two, two goals during week three and during weeks four, five and six did not attain any goals. During weeks seven and eight, Mark met two and three goals respectively. This

table illustrates that Mark had difficulty during the intervention phases but was able to demonstrate the skill set independently.

Student 3: John

John is a 17 year old male with emotional disturbance and a learning disability, his IQ as recorded on the WISC is above 70 placing him in the mild MR category. John's daily academic functioning level is between the first and second grade level as recorded from informal assessments. He has difficulty regulating his behavior. He is very concerned with achievement and even losing a single point on his point sheet (out of 50) can produce anxiety which leads to aggression i.e. property destruction, physical and verbal aggression towards peer and staff.

Reaction to the study:

Staff were concerned about his ability to absorb feedback if he did not meet his goals on a given week and it did lead to behavioral outbursts on two separate times during the study. His average goal attainment during the study was 2.12 goals per week and he had one week of refusal to participate because he did not like the goals he chose. Each week he anticipated reaching only one goal and despite cues from research and classroom staff, he did not increase his number of goals set.

Behavioral Concerns that impacted the study:

John experienced great disappointment when he failed to meet his goals. During these occurrences, he became verbally and physically aggressive (as documented by the school wide behavior management tracking system).

Baseline:

Baseline data revealed that John had met one goal during week one and two goals during week two.

Student Interview Results:

His self assessment revealed that he knew what goals were how to set them and how to meet them. He reported he had both met goals in the past and on other occasions had been unable to meet them. He reported knowing what his IEP was and that he had met goals from his IEP previously.

Staff Assessment of Skills:

Staff assessment reported slightly lower scores, a 40% ability to choose goals, a 35% ability to express them and a 30% ability to take action once goals were identified.

Interpretations of Results for Student 3:

John's progress and goal attainment was more consistent and demonstrated the ability to generalize the skills. He mastered at least one goal each week he participated with the exception of the week seven. During week seven, he refused to participate because he was frustrated with the goal he selected. Therefore he chose not to participate. His scores on both the self assessment and the staff assessment would lead one to believe he was not capable of making progress to the extent that he did. This student's skills grew during the study and he was able to maintain his ability to focus on goals during the maintenance phase without cuing. His behavioral outbursts, while not unexpected, drew attention to the fact that it can be difficult for students to face failure in an academic setting.

Research Questions Examined in relation to Student 3:

a. *Effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills:*

John's progress fully demonstrates the effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills. John made noteworthy progress during each phase of the study with the exception of week seven where he refused to participate because he didn't like the goal he selected.

b. *Promoting engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process:*

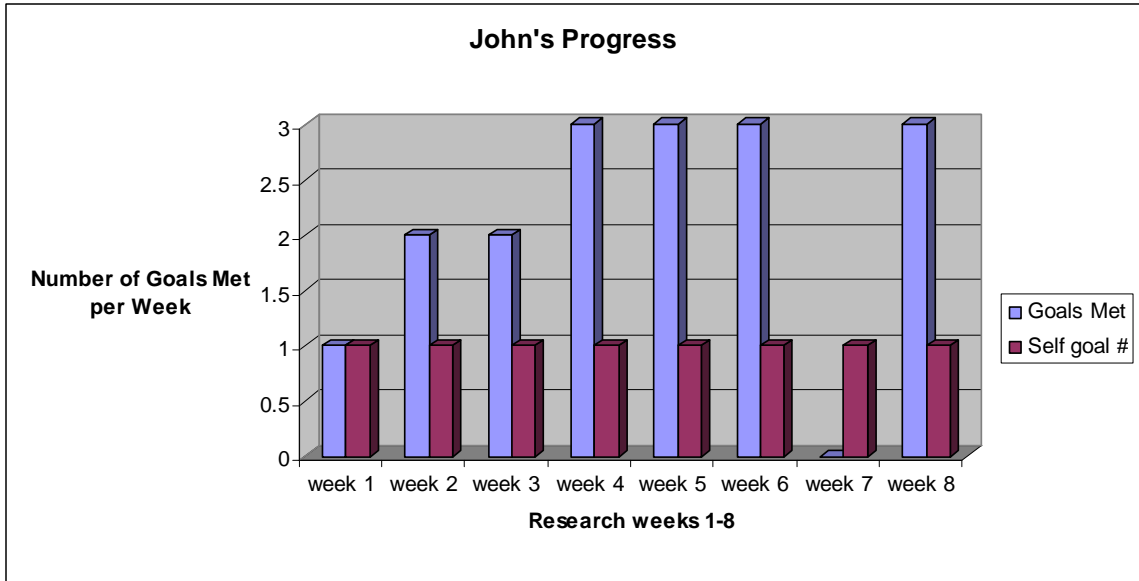
John's progress during the entire study supports the hypothesis that "ChoiceMaker" curriculum promoted the engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process. John demonstrated an ability to invest in the goals he was choosing. John's refusal to set a personal goal greater than one, despite cues, is of interest but classroom staff reported it had more to do with his personality than a lack of understanding or an inability to aim for a higher percentage.

c. *Increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.*

John's progress during the study increased thus demonstrating that with direct instruction, students are more likely to increase their goal attainment.

Table 5. John's Progress on IEP Goal Attainment by Week

The following table illustrates John's progress per week and the number of goals he met during each phase of the study coupled with the number of goals she set for herself to meet per week.



The data shows that John attained one goal during week one, two goals during weeks two and three and three goals during weeks four, five and six. John refused to participate during week seven because he did not like the goal he selected but demonstrated mastery of the skill set in week eight by attaining all three goals. This table illustrates that the curriculum was an effective tool for John in learning goal attainment skills and that he was able to demonstrate the skill independently, which provides hope for his ability to generalize the skill outside of the classroom.

Student 4:

Jen is a 16 year old female with emotional disturbance with a long and extensive history of psychiatric episodes resulting in hospitalizations. She also suffers from post traumatic stress syndrome disorder (PTSD). Her daily academic functioning level is third grade for reading and writing as reported by informal assessments. Her IQ as recorded by the WISC is above 70 placing her in the mild MR category. Her behavior presents as extremely willing to please and actively strives to meet staff expectations.

Reaction to Study:

Jennifer made progress each week and had no weeks of refusal or failure to make progress. She averaged a goal attainment of 2.25 goals per week. Interestingly, she varied her degree of goal setting number, she is one of two students that set different goal rates and when questioned as to why, she reported feeling more confident about her ability to meet the goals she picked as the study progressed.

Behavioral Concerns that impacted the study:

Jen often seeks attention negatively, however, this project afforded her positive means to gain attention and staff noticed a significant decrease in her attention seeking behaviors during throughout the intervention.

Baseline:

During base line she met two goals both week 1 and week 2, this is not surprising due to her desire to please and the goals she picked were considered by her team as well within her range.

Student Interview Results:

During her self assessment, she reported not knowing what a goal was or how to meet one; however she did report having met goals in the past and, at times, trying to reach a goal and being unable to meet the goal. Research staff reported that they had to explain exactly what a goal was to in order ensure clarity. She reported understanding that she has an IEP and that she has met goal from her IEP in the past.

Staff Assessment of Skills:

Staff reported she has a 30% ability to choose goals, a 35% ability to express goals and 30% ability to take action when identifying goals. It is difficult to truly

ascertain her knowledge base as her answers are not consistent. This was noted by research observer and by research staff in the classroom who work with her daily.

Interpretations of Results for Student 4:

This study provided an opportunity for Jen to shine, and she took full advantage. She made progress during each phase of the study and thrived off the positive attention. As a student who most often received attention for self-harm and/or negative or harmful ideations, this study truly changed the dynamic of her interactions with staff. She understood the expectations, did well with the routine and was able to generalize the skill set. Her interview was the only caveat, creating room for doubt as to her depth of knowledge surrounding goal setting and the process of goal attainment. When examining her data, it is clear that that she was able to set and attain goals throughout all phases of the study.

Research Questions Examined in relation to student 4:

a. *Effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills:*

Jen's progress supports the effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills. She was extremely receptive to the concepts and this program allowed for natural positive feedback on a regular basis which aided in decreasing her behaviors. During the study her behaviors declined from two to three episodes per day to two to three episodes per week as recorded in the school wide behavior management tracking system.

b. *Promoting engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process:*

Jen's progress during the entire study supports the hypothesis that "ChoiceMaker" curriculum promoted the engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process.

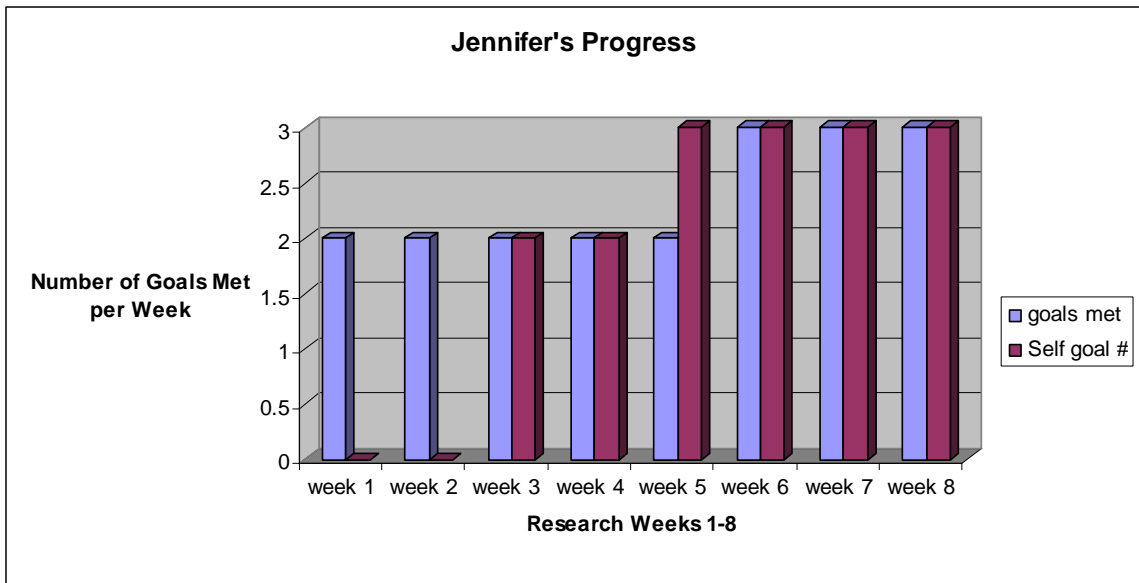
Jen made progress each week and maintained the progress during the maintenance phase which demonstrates her engagement in the process.

c. Increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.

Jen’s progress during the study increased, demonstrating that with direct instruction, she was more likely to increase their goal attainment.

Table 6: Jen’s Progress IEP Goal Attainment by Week

The following table illustrates Jen’s progress by week and the number of goals she met during each phase of the study coupled with the number of goals she set for herself to meet per week.



The data shows that Jennifer attained two goal during weeks one through five and three goals during weeks seven and eight.. This table illustrates that Jennifer responded very well to the direct instruction and learned the skill set. She demonstrated her mastery in the maintenance phase (weeks seven and eight) by meeting all three goals.

Student 5: Samantha

Samantha is a 20 year old female with EBD. Her daily academic functioning ranges from the 1st grade to pre kindergarten level for reading and writing as recorded by informal assessments, her IQ is below 60 as recorded by the WISC and she is placed in the MR category. She has difficulty understanding concepts and easily forgets material presented in earlier lessons. Research staff had some concern about her ability to remember the steps in goal attainment taught in the lessons however, with cueing and reminders she did fairly well.

Reaction to Study:

Her average goal attainment rate was 1.5 goals per week, but this included three weeks of refusal to participate. Samantha grew frustrated with the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum protocol that when IEP goals are met they were taken out of the pile. She repeated this concern throughout the project. She showed steady growth during the study despite the three weeks of refusal and did very well meeting three goals each week during the last phase when there were no reminders. Staff reported being extremely surprised at her ability to recall her goals coupled with her knowledge of what she was working towards during the goal setting. Samantha did not seem to firmly grasp the concept of picking the number of goals she believed she could meet and as such, staff reported needing to remind her how many she was working on.

Baseline:

During the baseline she met one goal during week 1 and two goals during week 2.

Behavioral Concerns that impacted the study:

Samantha refused to participate for three weeks during intervention. It is believed this was a copy cat behavior following another peer who had a behavioral episode and refused to participate.

Student Interview Results:

During the interview Samantha reported that one goal per week was just like her point sheet (students have one therapeutic goal documented on their daily point sheet) thus demonstrating a deeper understanding of the purpose of the project than originally projected. Her self assessment reported that she did neither understand what a goal is nor how to meet a goal; however she reported having tried to meet them in the past. She was unsure what her IEP was, and if she had ever met goals off her IEP in the past.

Staff Assessment of Skills:

Staff's assessment revealed that she has a 50% ability to choose goals, a 20% ability to express them and a 25% ability to take action once a goal is presented. This assessment is commensurate with the student's self assessment.

Interpretations of Results for Student 5:

There was considerable concern prior to the start of the study regarding Samantha's ability to participate in the study. She has the lowest IQ of any of the students and struggles the most to remember academic skills. She often requires re-teaching and staff was unsure how she would do in the maintenance phase of the study. When Samantha participated she made progress each week. She has three weeks of refusing to participate however, she showed an ability to generalize the skill set taught; during her interview she reported that the goal was similar to her point sheet therapeutic

goal. This statement was correct and furthermore she was the only student to draw this conclusion.

Research Questions Examined in relation to student 5:

a. *Effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills:*

Samantha's progress supports (with the weeks of refusal being a small limitation) the effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills. Samantha's cognitive abilities and lack of short term memory did not affect her progress during the maintenance phase. She had three weeks of refusal, during the intervention phase.

b. *Promoting engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process:*

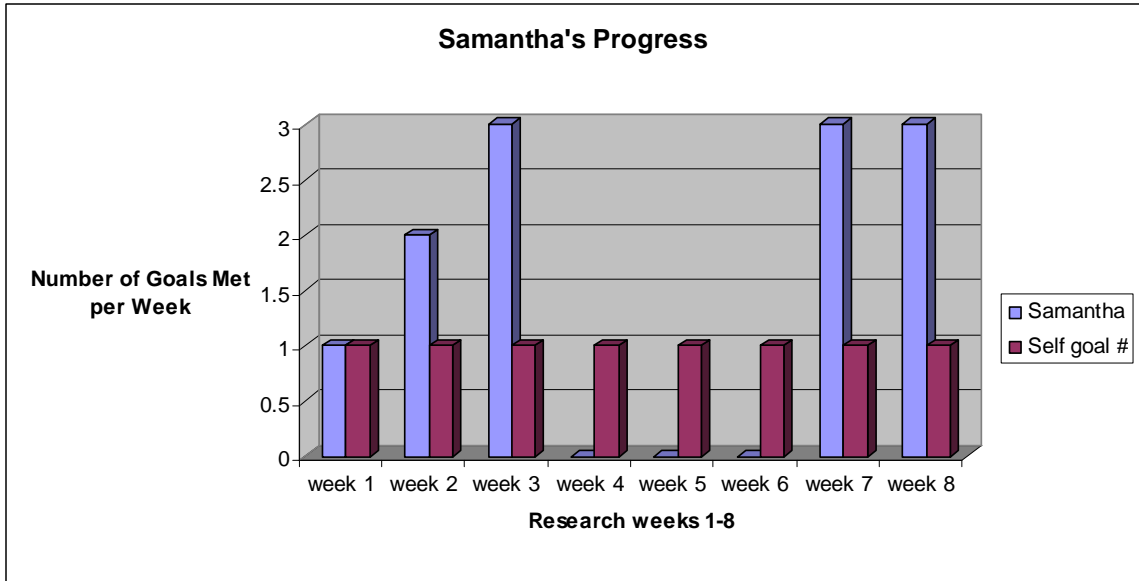
Samantha's progress during the study supports the hypothesis that "ChoiceMaker" curriculum promoted the engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process. Samantha made noteworthy progress during the phases where she had supports, demonstrating that with modifications this curriculum aided her engagement in the IEP goal attainment process.

c. *Increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.*

Samantha's progress during the study increased thus demonstrating that with direct instruction, students are more likely to increase their goal attainment.

Table 7: Samantha's Progress IEP Goal Attainment by Week

The following table illustrates Samantha's progress by week and the number of goals she met during each phase of the study coupled with the number of goals she set for herself to meet per week.



The data shows that Samantha attained one goal during week one and two goals during week two, two goals during weeks two and three. During weeks four through six Samantha refused to participate. During weeks seven and eight, Samantha met three goals each week. This table illustrates that despite refusing to participate, Samantha still demonstrated mastery of the skill set during the maintenance phase by independently choosing and attaining her three goals.

Student 6: Tanya

Tanya is a 15 year old female student with EBD who suffers from extreme agitation, paranoia and an inability to form peer relationships. Her daily academic functioning level is third to fourth grade for reading and writing as recorded by informal assessments and classroom observation. Her IQ as recorded on the WISC is below 60 placing her in the MR category. She can be aggressive towards staff and peers and

misses substantial class time due to her behaviors. Her paranoia significantly affects her functioning both academically and socio emotionally.

Reaction to Study:

Tanya averaged 2.25 goals being met per week and did not have any weeks of refusal or lack of progress. She also picked the maximum amount of goals per week, responding to staff encouragement which classroom staff noted was not surprising since she enjoys pleasing staff and receiving positive praise.

Baseline:

During the baseline she met 3 goals week one and 3 goals week two.

Behavioral Concerns that Impacted the study:

Tanya missed a substantial amount of class time due to interfering behaviors but was able to maintain steady progress throughout the intervention. Research and classroom staff believed that this project allowed her to focus on manageable goals for a period of time thus offering her the maximum potential to meet the goals. In addition, drawing attention to positive occurrences tends to create more positive results in this student.

Student Interview Results:

In the self assessment she reported knowing what goals meant, how to set and meet them and that she has both met goals in the past and at times had been unable to meet them. She reported not knowing what her IEP was or if there were goals on there she had met.

Staff Assessment of Skills:

On the staff assessment, results indicated that she has a 35% ability to choose goals, a 30% ability to express them and a 30% ability to take action once goals had been identified.

Interpretations of Results for Student 6:

Tanya's psychiatric episodes make it difficult for her to participate in class without a loss of instructional time. Her interfering behaviors did impact her progress but by illustrating specific goals, classroom staff reported this study allowed Tanya to focus on manageable goals and did not overwhelm her. She was able to meet goals each week and did not have weeks of refusal, which was remarkable given her behaviors during the study. She averaged four episodes per day (as recorded in the school wide behavior management tracking system).

Research Questions Examined in relation to student 6:

a. Effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills:

Tanya's progress supports the effectiveness of the curriculum for teaching self-determination skills. Tanya's progress did vacillate but when viewing her progress in its entirety she exhibited growth in her ability to set and obtain goals, thus supporting the effectiveness of the curriculum.

b. Promoting engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process:

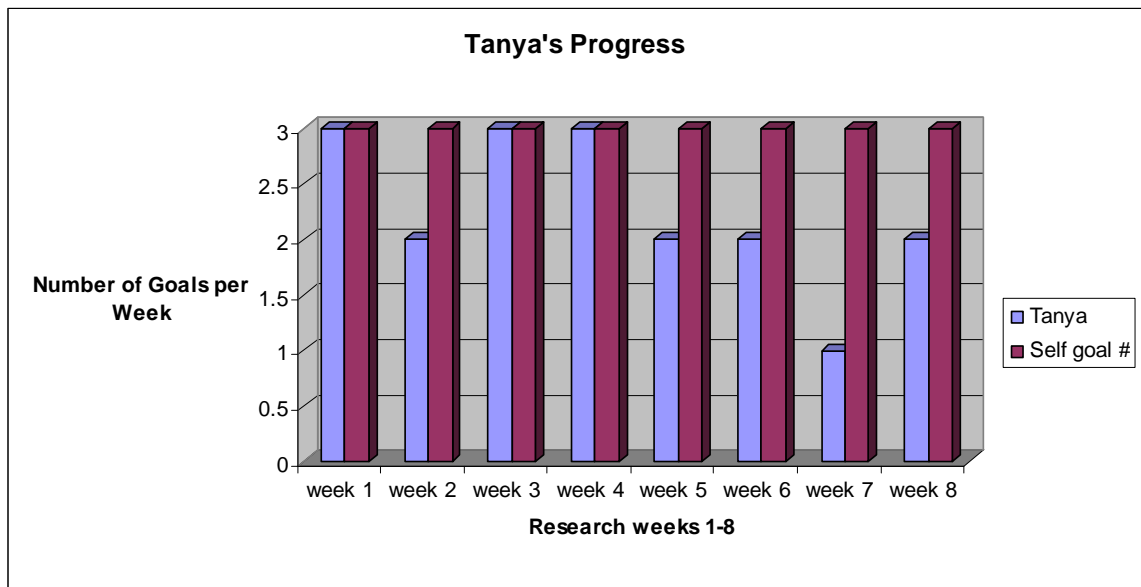
Tanya's progress during the study supports the hypothesis that "ChoiceMaker" curriculum promoted the engagement of students in the IEP goal achievement process. Tanya maintained her skills throughout the study.

c. Increasing goal attainment with direct instruction.

Tanya's progress during the study increased thus demonstrating that with direct instruction, students are more likely to increase their goal attainment.

Table 8: Tanya's Progress IEP Goal Attainment by Week

The following table illustrates Tanya's progress by week and the number of goals she met during each phase of the study coupled with the number of goals she set for herself to meet per week.



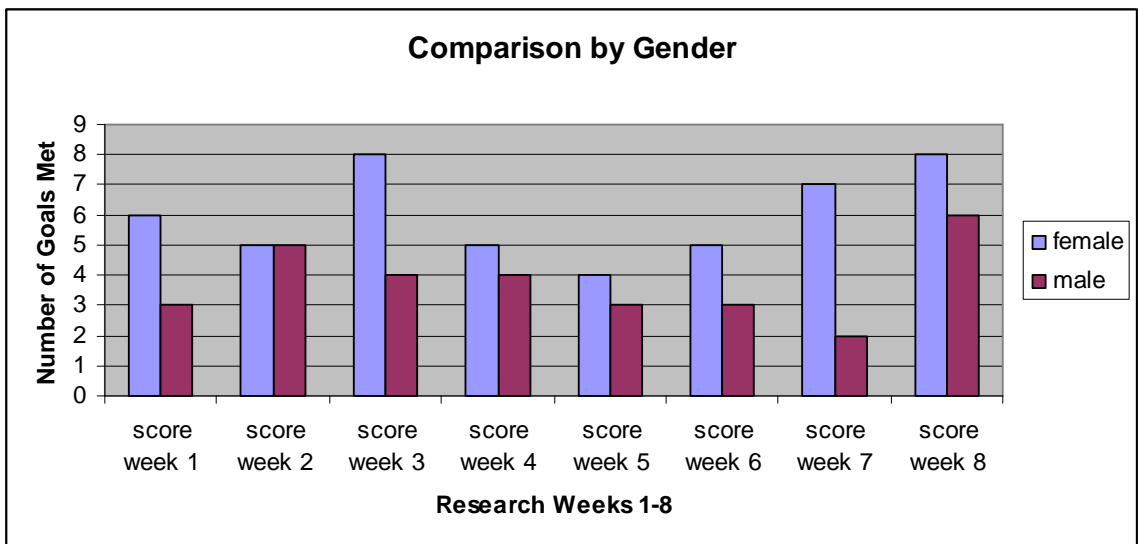
The data shows that Tanya attained three goals during week one, two goals during week two, during the baseline phase. During the intervention she met three and two goals during weeks three through six. During the maintenance phase she met one goal week seven and two goals week eight. This table illustrates that the direct instruction

assisted Tanya is learning the goal attainment skills, and that she performed better with reminders as provided during the intervention phase.

Comparison by gender:

Comparison by gender yielded results that demonstrating the female population made consistently higher averages throughout the study beginning in baseline and continuing through the maintenance phase. In totality, results demonstrated that males experienced a total of a combined 10 weeks of refusal or lack of progress where as the females experienced a total of only 3 weeks of refusal or lack of progress.

Table 9. Comparison by Gender by Week

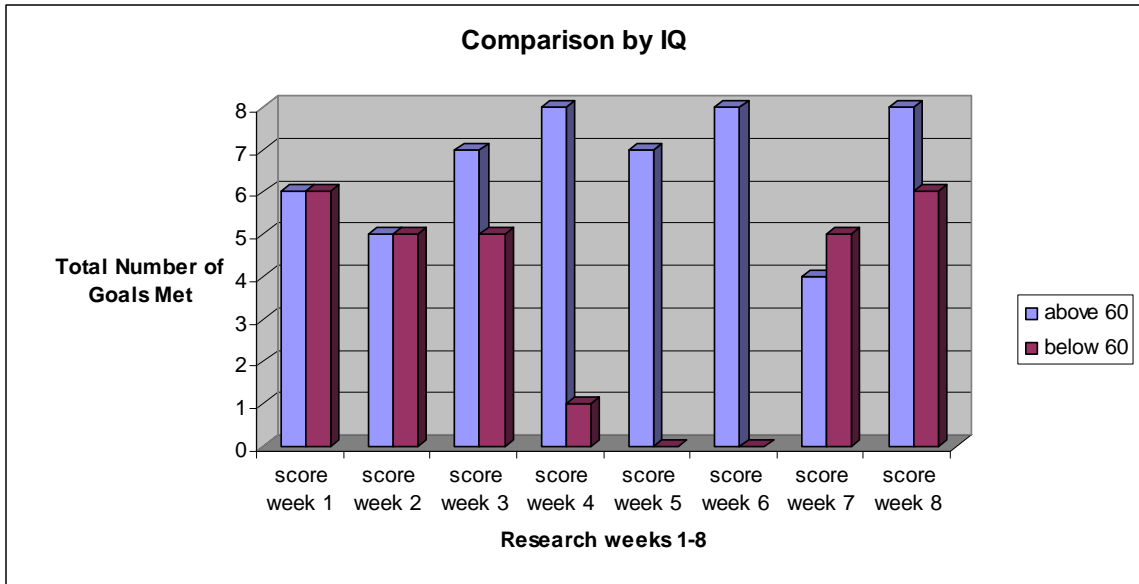


Comparison by full scale IQ range:

Comparison by grouping of IQ score (below 60 and above 60) demonstrated that that students who fell above 60 full scale IQ score made more steady progress whereas the students with an IQ reported as less than 60 consistently did not achieve as many goals during the study. In addition, the students with an IQ below 60 had 12 weeks of

lack of refusal or lack of progress where as the students with an IQ of above 60 had only one week recorded of refusal or lack of progress.

Table 10. Comparison by IQ by Week



Results Related to the Research Questions:

1. Is the “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self

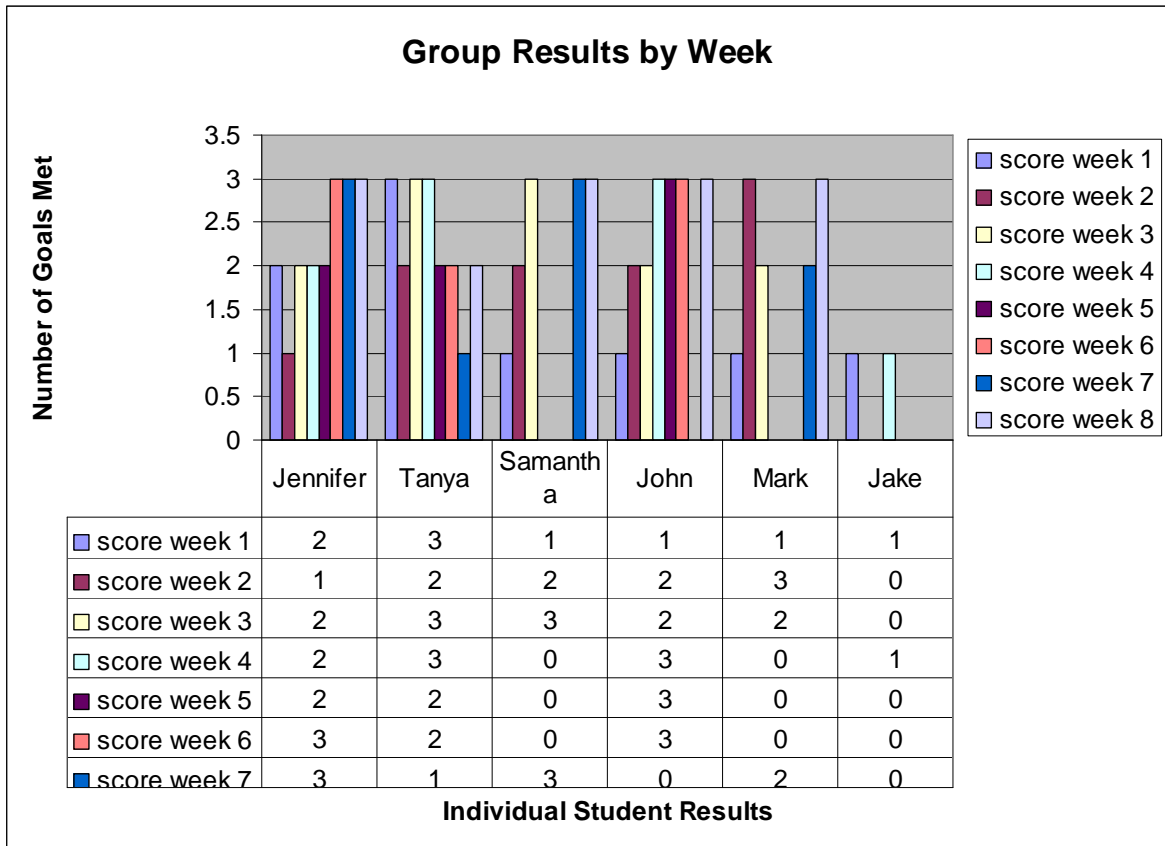
determination skills to students with EBD in a private separate day setting?

“ChoiceMaker” was an effective tool for teaching self determination skills to students with EBD in a private separate day setting with modifications and accommodations as demonstrated by the majority of students experiencing gains in the areas of goal setting and attainment. The students with EBD who participated in the study were placed in a private separate day setting due to their behaviors being too intense for the public school

or public separate setting. These behaviors often manifest themselves within academic failure as seen in the study, such refusing to participate or exhibiting non compliance in relation to academic tasks. This required the research staff to meet several times to discuss switching to the modified content lessons and changing the number of goals during the maintenance period due to the stress and resulting behaviors this caused in the students.

The curriculum created positive moments for three of the students and many moments of stress for the other three. The moments of stress related to the fear of failure and an inability to comprehend materials, which was observed by research staff during observations and noted by students in the interviews. The positive moments were related to goal achievement and monitoring goals independently and was observed as well as reported by the students in the interviews. These results were neither age nor gender specific but rather correlated directly to cognitive ability levels. Three of the students (Jake, Jen and John had full scale IQ(as evidenced through the WISC III) of 60 or higher- these same three students were the ones to become extremely agitated and upset if they were unable to comprehend the material. Three of the student's full scale IQ scores (Samantha, Tanya and Mark) were 60 or below and they did not demonstrate agitation with the inability to comprehend a lesson. Students who had demonstrated anxiety regarding their performance on the daily point sheet prior to the study, also displayed anxiety and when discussing their weekly goals and goal attainment. At times this anxiety led to perseveration which disrupted class.

Table 11. Table illustrating Score per week of IEP Goal Attainment



The students each week set a goal of how many of their 3 chosen goals they believed they could meet for the week. As demonstrated in the chart above every child had at least one week where progress was illustrated. The goals were chosen due to their existence on the students' IEP, and only socio-emotional goals were used in an attempt to keep maximize attainability. The research team (researcher, classroom staff and social worker) were concerned that if academic goals were used and the student

simply struggled due to IQ or a learning disability that it could negatively impact the result of the study and the students' sense of accomplishment. By utilizing the socio-emotional goals the students all had equal opportunity. All staff noted that the language of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum quickly became part of the student's everyday language and phrases such as, "did you meet your goal today", "what goal are you working on", "I bet you can't meet as many as I can" were very quickly observed in the milieu and continued until the close of the research study which was also the close of the summer session.

Classroom staff interviewed revealed the most positive aspect of the research was the daily goal tracking sheet and the student/staff assessments. The staff thought that the daily tracking sheets were much like the daily point sheets, providing a simple and effective way for students to monitor their progress. The self assessments completed by the students assisted the staff in gaining new knowledge they were embarrassed to admit they had never thought to ask. For example, the classroom staff assumed every student knew what their IEP was because all six students participating in the study had attended their IEP during the last year. This was clearly erroneous as only four reported knowing what it was, and only three reported having knowledge that they made progress. Staff considered this extremely helpful knowledge and developed lessons to teach what the IEP is and how it affects the student during the coming academic year. Research staff (also school staff) viewed the program and curriculum very positively and believed that it was applicable to the high school program. School staff also requested permission to use the curriculum with the entire school next year during clinical groups. Research staff

reported that the increased self awareness coupled with the life skill lessons presented were valuable to each program within the school.

Challenges to Using the Curriculum

The difficulties using the curriculum during the study were observed by both classroom staff and research staff in that the curriculum was difficult for students to understand and that the plan provided in the curriculum was too complex and students required a simplified version in order to maximize success. The research staff (classroom teacher, assistant and social workers) developed two forms to be used in conjunction with the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum. The first was a daily tracking sheet which was used during the baseline and during intervention phase one and two. This allowed the students to daily report and self assess their ability to meet the weekly goals. This also assisted the classroom staff when meeting with the students at the end of the week, to compile the daily sheets and make a determination with the student if the goal had been met or not. The second form added an even more simplified version of the plan to assist students in tracking their goals during the week. Research staff found the students were distracted by how busy the original form was, and the simplified form proved easier for the students to navigate.

1. How did the “ChoiceMaker” Curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal achievement process?

The curriculum was reported as being relatively engaging for students but

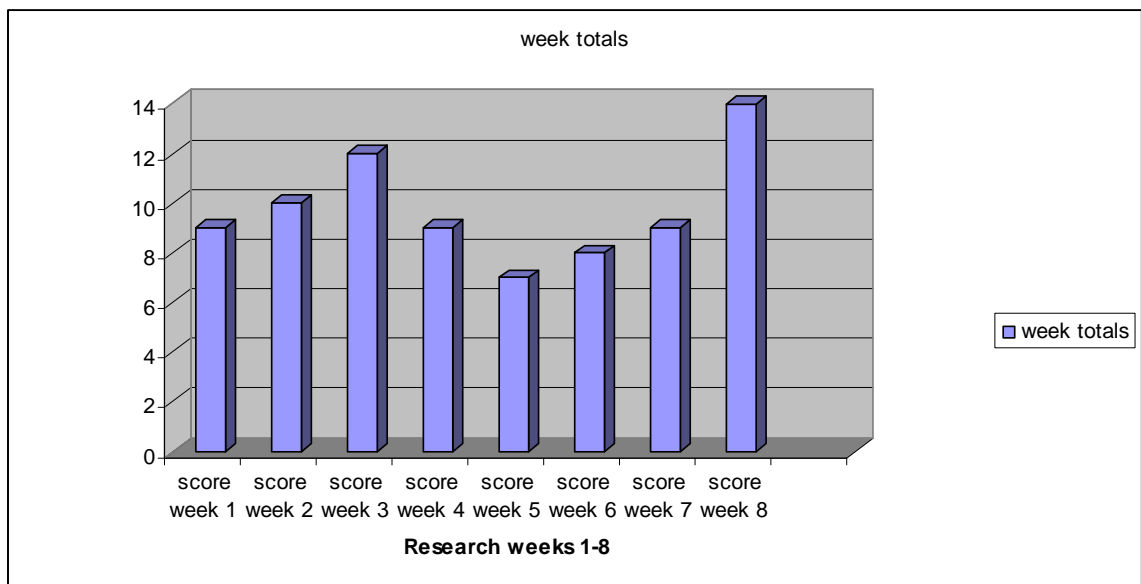
required modifications as previously discussed. Prior to the study research and classroom staff were concerned that because these students are used to being rewarded extrinsically for a project like this one where extra time and effort are required. Noteworthy is the ability of the curriculum and research to engage students so as not to require additional compensation during the research study. Students were interested in achieving the daily goal sheets (a modification made by research staff); during staff interviews the daily goal sheets were credited as having a large impact on the engagement of the students. Each student was able to finish the study in the entirety which demonstrates not only an investment level but also engagement in the curriculum. Out of the six students profiled each completed a pre and post interview/assessment, and a total of eight weeks intervention.

2. Did students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills is provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum?

During baseline the data showed that as a group the students met nine goals during weeks one and ten goals during week two. Classroom staff reported during their post interviews they believed the number of goals met during the baseline phase was because, the concept was new and exciting and therefore a great deal of activity surrounding the new forms and a new routine in the classroom. The intervention phase began with The students receiving two weeks of instruction from the curriculum and were tracking goals during this time and showed an overall increase from the baseline date the first week with a drop the second week. The students then experienced a lower number of met goals until the end of the study, which may be attributed to the school schedule. The maintenance phase resulted in substantial progress with the group meeting 13 goals in

totality. Progress is noted during each phase of the study and although the number of goals did not rise substantially during the intervention phase (with the direct instruction), the number of goals attained did rise substantially in the maintenance phase which also supports the statement that direct instruction assisted the students in learning goal attainment skills.

Table 12. Week Totals in Whole Group Format (N=6)



This table illustrates that the group totals increased during the first week of direct instruction (intervention week three), and then varied slightly during weeks four and five. The increase of group progress is demonstrated again in week six with a steady increase throughout the rest of the project. The highest number of goals met as a group is during week eight which demonstrates two key points. The students benefited from the direct instruction and the students were able to demonstrate the skill independently.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The findings of this research study are organized in the following manner: first, overall trends in the data are presented, then the findings for each research question are discussed. Implications for policy and practice are imbedded in the discussion of each research question. Finally, potential future research directions are offered.

Research Questions

1. Was “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self-determination skills to EBD students in a private separate day setting?
 - a. Did students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills was provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum?
2. Did the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal-achievement process?
 - a. Did an increase in student responsibility promote goal attainment?
 - b. Did an increase in student awareness of IEP goals promote IEP progress (as noted by mastery of specific IEP goals and objectives)?

Self determination skills enable individuals to advocate for their needs, make decisions, and improve their ability to function independently in the world (Jones 2006). Students who receive special education services, especially in a private day setting, are often sheltered and decisions are not typically made with the students but for the students. Given that coupled with the fact that under IDEA, special education services end at age twenty-one along with the safety net they provide, the importance of explicit teaching of self determination skills cannot be overstated. Therefore, the impetus for this study was

to identify a curriculum that would aide students with EBD in a private day setting developing and or enhancing their self determination skills in an effort to improve their ability to function independently. The students who participated are representative of 2.6% of the nationwide school aged population (OSEP, 2006) who are educated in a separate setting away from their general education peers and the hope of this author that the results of this study could then, with additional supporting research be generalized for the larger population.

1. Was “ChoiceMaker” an effective curriculum tool for teaching self-determination skills to EBD students in a private separate day setting?
 - a. Did students demonstrate increased goal attainment when direct instruction of self-determination skills was provided using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum?

Direct Conclusions:

The data trend indicates the students made progress overall, supporting the statement that the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum is an effective tool to teach self determination skills. Progress of the students was examined in terms of two factors: IQ and gender. The students with full scale IQs above 60 were able to attain more goals per week than those of their peers who full scale IQ fell below 60. The three students with an IQ lower than 60 and a diagnosis of EBD seemed to have difficulty absorbing and information provided during the research project.

As recorded in the school wide behavior management tracking system, three students (each male) experienced significant interfering behaviors resulting in a loss of

instructional time; which affected their overall success within the study. Loss of instructional time occurs when a student's behavior requires an intervention of time out. Students are assigned time out in 10 minute intervals or can request a self time out for a five minute interval. Jake, Mark and John all received multiple referrals during the study, and in interviews regarding reasons for their agitation, they cited frustration regarding various aspects of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum. Quotes from the students include, "I don't want to work on my goal today- I already know I didn't earn it" and "It isn't fair his goal is easier for him than mine is for me- all he has to do is raise his hand before asking a question". These three students struggled to maintain their behavior during class and received time out to try and de-escalate their frustration and to avoid distracting the other students. This resulted in a loss of instructional time and impacted the student's ability to meet the chosen goals during the study.

These students experienced difficulty in two different ways: emotionally and academically. It is not possible to definitively state that a low IQ is the responsible factor. One possibility is that for students with the combination of a low IQ and EBD, "ChoiceMaker" is not a favorable intervention because it uses tracking performance as a tool to demonstrate success. This leaves room for future research to determine if IQ or dual diagnosis is a factor in using "ChoiceMaker" successfully.

The research site participates in a token economy driven by daily point sheets. Students can earn a total of 50 points per week and two hundred and fifty per week. The average of their points for the week translates to a level and each level has privileges associated with it. The higher the student's level, the more privileges and the greater level of independence is afforded to the student. The token economy is extremely

important to the students and the students become frustrated if their level is negatively impacted by a loss of points in class.

This research study was conducted during a regular period of the day and therefore corresponded with a percentage of points on their daily point sheet (5/50 points). During the study, when students demonstrated extended non-compliance, he or she was asked to leave the room and spend time in a resource room, one on one with staff. This routine allows time for the student to regain focus or control and to encourage the student to verbalize his or her feelings and move past the issue while encouraging the student not to act out to express emotions. This process can last anywhere from as little as two minutes to as long as an hour. Depending on how long the student remained out of class determines the amount of points adjusted which in turn affects the weekly level. This implication is that a student would not earn points for being out of class, and would not attain a goal chosen for the week because all of the goals were based off socio-emotional goals from the student's IEP and included behavior management.

In conclusion, by missing time during the research - the students did not make progress on the research study. In totality, the students were losing in two areas: the research study and the daily point sheet. For these three students who are invested in the level system, this double consequence had unforeseen results. The students lost in both areas and it affected their long term progress in the study.

The second trend that surfaced regarding the effectiveness of "ChoiceMaker" is in relation to the IEP goals and the daily point sheet. The daily point sheet has a therapeutic goal taken directly from their IEP. The research study used current IEP goals which are also used for the daily point sheet. There were three occasions that a therapeutic goal was

chosen by a student and this same goal was being used on their daily point sheet. This affected the students desire to meet the goal in both a positive and negative manner. In some instances the students became more motivated because the point sheet on any given day may have contained one of the goals the student had selected to work on during that week. This assisted some students in remembering what goal they were working on and provided a reminder. In other instances this seemed to provide undue stress for the students, having the same goal on their point sheet and for the study drew unnecessary attention to their progress, specifically lack of progress and resulted in behavioral outbursts. Recorded in the school wide behavior management tracking system were seven incidents of behaviors where students cited the reason for their frustration was because they lost points on the daily point sheet and also failed to meet an IEP goal from the study because it was the same goal.

The occurrence of a duplicative goal on both the daily point sheet and weekly goal was unanticipated by the research staff. Examining the results yielded the following conclusions; the student's progress was not affected by the co-occurrence of the goal on the daily point sheet and the weekly goal for the study. This coincidence occurred three separate times during the course of the thirteen week study but did not impact goal achievement. The student's progress was not higher when the duplicative goal occurred.

Similarly students did not comprehend the purpose of setting a number of goals per week that they felt they could attain. Goals were taken directly from the socio-emotional category on the IEP. Each student was asked to pick three goals per week and then set a goal as to how many of the three he or she believed he could master. The purpose of choosing the number of goals was to teach goal setting embedded within the

curriculum. This proved to be one of the most difficult concepts to teach the students. Staff noted that students became upset if they did not pick a high enough number, meaning that their progress during the week had been higher than the number of goals they predicted that they could meet. Furthermore the students reported not wanting “jinx” themselves by choosing a number of goals to meet and then having the number be less than what they attained. In some cases the students had to be reminded repeatedly to choose a number and even after being reminded, the students did not seem to comprehend the purpose.

These conclusions are important for the future research and practitioners who may choose to replicate the study. In previous studies the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum was not used with students who were invested in a token economy. The token economy needs to be taken into account and planned for. The ideal would be that a replication of the study takes place where progress setting and attaining goals had separate rewards from the token economy. This would ensure that the complications which arose in this study from the token economy and the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum progress tracking do not interfere.

Overall the data collected illustrates four out of six students participating increased their ability level to meet goals and the ultimate purpose of the study was to increase this skill set. In the staff assessments of each student, the total percentage of students able to choose and express goals, for the entire student population rose ten percent over an thirteen week period, thus demonstrating an improvement in emergence of self-determination skills.

Interpretive Conclusions

The study was grounded in the theory of self-determination and that by receiving the intervention through curriculum; the students would thereby enhance their self-determination skills. Wehmeyer et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of the history of the concept of self-determination. He summarized Nirje's definition of self-determination in individuals as the ability to make choices, self-advocate, be self-efficacious, and possess self-management, self-knowledge, self-regulation, autonomy, and independence. Wehmeyer (2006) redefined self-determination, stating that self-determined behavior refers to volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to maintain or improve one's quality of life. "Individuals with higher levels of self-determination can readily muster behavioral resources for autonomous action and self-regulation along with internal affective resources of self-realization and psychological empowerment to accomplish their personal goals" (Eisenman, 2007 p.2).

Examining the definition provided by Eisenman., the students participating in this study did not fully become capable of fulfilling that definition and becoming truly self-determined individuals. Students struggled with being autonomous in an environment that did not fully support true autonomy. Because the student's actions are monitored by behavioral point sheets, halls are monitored by staff and classroom assignments are given multiple times per accommodations from IEPs- it is difficult for a student to truly have the autonomy to fail. The school environment at the research site is set up as a series of checks and balances which do not truly allow the student to act in an autonomous way. This is purposeful, to ensure safety, academic progress and correct implementation of the IEP. However, the students are left in a contained bubble that does not allow for the risks and failures that typical adolescents experience.

The greater picture reveals the students are not yet capable of being the sole causal agent in their life. Experience has shown the guardians and case managers of these students that too much autonomy has led to self endangerment, failure, legal activity and poor choice making. The interpretive conclusion is that the students did receive the fundamental training for self-determined actions, and with additional training, time to practice and supportive environment the skills initially illustrated during the study would continue to grow.

Speculative Conclusion

In reviewing the results, IQ and gender seem to emerge as factors in relationship to the student's performance. During the project, students possessing an IQ of sixty points or higher made more noteworthy progress than the students with an IQ of sixty or below. This leads this researcher to speculate that the curriculum may not work as well for students with a co-occurrence of EBD and a low IQ. The students participating in this study with a low IQ and EBD demonstrated a higher level of behavior incidents resulting in a loss of instructional time and as a result loss of project time.

The study utilized a system like the behavioral point system and students mastered goals during the study. The group of students with the low IQ also had a higher level of behavioral incidents, and lower level of success within the study. The lack of success was very difficult for the students and there was a great deal of frustration. These students demonstrated difficulty with point sheet progress in the academic year as reported by classroom staff during the interview process. Two of the students have individual behavior plans that involve not using a zero or one on the point sheet as it results in stress and anxiety. This same reaction occurred with the study. When the

students did not experience success they were not as motivated to continue and required a lot of verbal praise and encouragement to reengage. This writer speculates that this curriculum may need to be paired with additional reinforcement for this population.

2. Did the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum promote the engagement of students in the goal-achievement process?
 - a. Did an increase in student responsibility promote goal attainment?
 - b. Did an increase in student awareness of IEP goals promote IEP progress (as noted by mastery of specific IEP goals and objectives)?

Direct Conclusions

The results of the level of engagement of students within the study were varied. The research team attributes this to the school schedule during the time of the intervention. The following chart notes the timeline of the project.

Start Date	Hiatus Dates	End Date	Total # of Days	Baseline	Intervention Phase 1	Intervention Phase 2	Maintenance
April 28, 2008	June 16- June 30, 2008	July 31, 2008	58 school days = 13 weeks	10 school days = 2 weeks	20 school days= 4 weeks	10 days= 2 weeks	25 school days= 5 weeks

The students participated in two weeks of baseline, and there was no intervention. The first and second phases involved daily lessons, videos and teacher feedback as the intervention. The last phase which was maintenance took place after a three week break. Students were given the last lesson prior to the three week break as a review. This lesson reviewed the goal process and the steps for using the plan of action

work sheet. The students were able to demonstrate the ability to verbalize the process and did not present any difficulties in remembering the steps to the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum. However, although the students participated in a summer program which mirrors the school year, students drive and desire to participate in school activities was noted to be lower (as reported in staff interviews at the close of the project). Also of interest, attendance was noted to be higher than in the regular school year. The desire to participate in school based activities did lead classroom staff and research staff to closely monitor the engagement process within the study. The only event noted was that students required a refresher for the action plan to ensure accuracy. Other than the need for the refresher, students remained engaged and compliant with the project in entirety. This was extremely beneficial as there were not any students who withdrew from the study or refused to participate for longer than a one week segment. There were students who did not make favorable gain, but this was credited to behavioral difficulties rather than a disinterest in the process.

Another issue affecting the engagement of students was the school’s token economy. The research staff chose not to reward the students outside of verbal praise and class recognition due to the potential conflict of interfering in the token economy and not wanting to lessen the value of the daily point sheet. However, staff noted multiple times throughout the study that the students noted the desire to “earn” a token for their progress during the research study. The research team did not feel that this would occur due to points being awarded to students on their daily point sheet. Therefore the discussion had regarding the students wanting to earn a token for completing the daily research assignments led to the following conclusion: the research may run more smoothly by

creating an alternate reward system that runs in conjunction with the token economy. This will ensure that the daily point sheet and current token economy are valued while providing the students with recognition beyond verbal praise.

Interpretative Conclusions

This issue of motivation and requiring rewards for completing tasks raises the concern that students at a private separate day setting become programmed to receive rewards after each task is completed. The initial outcomes of rewarding students for completing tasks seem valuable but the long term consequences could be devastating. The average length of enrollment at a private day setting for the students who participated in the study was five years, and none of the students who participated demonstrated the ability to be transitioned to a less restrictive setting. The student could average as many as eight to ten years in a private separate day setting, participating in a token economy the entire time. The concern raised by this researcher is the ability to function without immediate rewards. In a job setting, employees do not receive more than the occasional verbal praise from a supervisor. The tangible reward is a paycheck but the length of time between the reward and the task completion is substantial. This school did not demonstrate any efforts to decrease the importance of the daily point sheet and level system with students who are older or are in their last year. Two students who participated in the study are earning their certificate of completion in the coming school year and although they do participate in job programs run by the school- they still receive points while at the job site.

Speculative Conclusions

The incorporation of project language into the daily routine was the largest illustration of the ability of the curriculum to increase engagement in the goal attainment process. The language of the project became common place not only by classroom staff but also with the students. For example, students would cue each other by stating, “what is the first step if you want to complete this problem”, the language very quickly infiltrated into the student’s vocabulary which was observed both by the classroom and research staff.

Although not a measurable tool, this clearly demonstrates the students had in fact absorbed the important idea of the curriculum. This phenomenon also gives way to future research with this population using this curriculum. Rather than have the students set individual goals for how many goals each student felt he or she could attain, the class could set group goals. For instance the group could work together to name a number of goals they felt could be met in a given week or month. This would eliminate some of the stress felt by individuals to succeed and provide an opportunity for group success.

Implications for Future

“ChoiceMaker” curriculum had been used twice before in a study by German, Martin, Marshall & Sale (2000) and by Walden (2002) in which two different types of students had participated. German et al. had a cohort of six students in a public high school with moderate to low IQ, and all identified as learning disabled. Walden’s research involved a cohort of five students in college who had been identified with as other health impaired and/or learning disabled with each having average to low average IQ. Neither study reviewed results by gender or by IQ. Each study called for

“ChoiceMaker” to be used with a different population. This research provides a starting point for further research with the EBD population taking into consideration the variances noted within this study.

The study results demonstrated four students making measurable progress in the areas of goal setting and attainment. The language of the project became common place not only by classroom staff but also with the students. For example, students would cue each other by stating, “what is the first step if you want to complete this problem”, the language very quickly infiltrated into the student’s vocabulary which was observed both by the classroom and research staff. This use of language and vocabulary prompted the teachers to include goal setting as part of the daily routine for the coming school year and to review weekly the student’s progress on not only IEP goals but also personal goals. One of the suggestions made by classroom staff during the exit interview was to have allowed the students to pick personal goals as opposed to strictly IEP goals. The staff reported understanding the purpose of the IEP goals as it related to the ultimate goal of the research but was intrigued to see the impact of the goal setting process on student’s personal goals.

The staff response to the curriculum was the most positive unanticipated outcome. The study was not overly publicized prior to commencement, and the staff discussed the curriculum without the research team being present. A team of staff approached the research team about the feasibility of using the curriculum for the entire school population during the next school year. All staff exposed to the curriculum felt the curriculum offered valuable tools to the students to improve self-determination skills.

Staff reported that self-determination skills were under-developed for not only the targeted research population but for many of the students attending the school.

Recommendations

1. Research using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum should be continued for students with EBD in various settings.
2. Research using “ChoiceMaker” curriculum should further examine gender and IQ comparisons.
3. Using the “ChoiceMaker” curriculum to target IEP goals as well as personally identified goals.
4. Training of educational professionals in the area of self-determination, specifically teachers working with students with disabilities.
5. Determining the effects of a token economy as it relates to students with EBD and the possible implications this carries for students as they transition into the postsecondary world.
6. Ensure that research was not conducted during a time period with a school break.

Policy Implications

The need for direct instruction of goal attainment for students with EBD is supported by multiple sources as stated in the literature reviewed. The presence of such state and local standards pertaining to self-determination illustrates the universality of the need for instruction in self-determination for all students (Turnball & Turnball, 2006; Zigmond, 2006). The transition plan, statutory mandate of the IEP is the appropriate avenue to pursue policy changes thus ensuring that all students with disabilities are taught

goal attainment strategies. Currently, students are given goals pertaining to post secondary outcomes without the tools to achieve these goals. Policy mandates surrounding not only transition services but also skill sets to be taught within the school setting would support the student's autonomy and offer opportunities for growth in the area of self-determination.

Summary

Six students with EBD, who attend a private separate day school, participated in an thirteen week study to determine the effect of the "ChoiceMaker" curriculum on goal attainment, specifically IEP goals. Four of the six students made marked progress demonstrating an increase in their ability to choose, express and take action towards goals of their choosing. Wehmeyer et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of the history of the concept of self-determination. He summarized Nirje's definition of self-determination in individuals as the ability to make choices, self-advocate, be self-efficacious, and possess self-management, self-knowledge, self-regulation, autonomy, and independence. Wehmeyer (2006) redefined self-determination, stating that self-determined behavior refers to volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to maintain or improve one's quality of life. When examining Wehmeyer's definition in relationship to this research study, four of the six students were able to act a causal agent in their own life and improve their outcomes on the IEP.

Students who participated in the study demonstrated an increased goal attainment rate when provided direct instruction. This was due, in large part, to the fact the students received no formal instruction on goal attainment prior to the research study, (as noted in

classroom staff interviews). The classroom staff reported that although the students use a daily point sheet and that the daily point sheet includes a daily goal there had not been any direction for the students on the process of breaking down a goal into manageable or attainable portions and then tracking the progress to determine the student's ability. Both staff and students reported the direct instruction piece of the study to be a valuable tool. The classroom staff reported being somewhat embarrassed that the goal attainment process was not being taught prior to the study, as it was clear once the study began that the students benefited from the direct instruction approach. In addition, an indirect effect seen was that all of the students demonstrated significant gains in the knowledge of the IEP document and the fact that goals existed on the IEP and that they were to be actively working on these goals. This knowledge increased from a baseline of simply knowing that either, an IEP existed or that an IEP was simply a meeting to be attended annually. Jerman and Martin (2000) and Walden (2002) recommendations are made to extend the population in which the curriculum had been studied with and extend the age group. In addition this research focused solely on students in a restrictive setting, generalizing that due to the intensity of the behaviors, if these students demonstrated growth using the methodology- it would be feasible to surmise the same disability category in a less restrictive setting would also experience growth.

The staff response to the curriculum was the most positive unanticipated outcome. The study was not overly publicized prior to commencement, and the staff discussed the curriculum without the research team being present. A team of staff approached the research team about the feasibility of using the curriculum for the entire school population during the next school year. All staff exposed to the curriculum felt the

curriculum offered valuable tools to the students to improve self-determination skills. Staff reported that self-determination skills were under-developed for not only the targeted research population but for many of the students attending the school.

References

Ackerman, B. (2006). Learning Self-determination: Lessons from the Literature for Work with Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities. *Child Youth Care Forum*. Issue 35, p. 327-337

Agran, M., & Wehmeyer, M. (2003). Self-determination. In D. Ryndak & S. Alper (Eds.), *Curriculum and instruction for students with significant disabilities in inclusive settings* (pp. 259-276). Needham Heights, Mass: Allyn and Bacon.

Angyal, A. "The Holistic Approach in Psychiatry." *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 105:178-182 (1948).

Barrie, W., & McDonald, J. (2002). Administrative support for student-led Individualized Education Programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 23, 116-122.

Bateman, B.D., Herr, C., & Kinney, T.E. (2003). Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives. Verona, Wisc.: IEP Resources.

Carter, E.W., Lane, K.L., Pierson, M.R., & Glaeser, B. (2006). Self-Determination Skills and Opportunities of Transition-Age Youth with Emotional Disturbance and Learning Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, v72 n.3.

Lane, K.L., Carter, E.W. (2006). Supporting Transition-Age Youth With and At Risk for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders at the Secondary Level: A Need for Further Inquiry *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, Summer, Vol. 14, Issue 2, pp. 66-70.

Chambers, C.R., Wehmeyer, M., Saito, Y., Yumiko; Lida, Kerry M.; Lee, Youngsun; Singh, Vandana. (2007). Self Determination: What do we know, where do we go? *Exceptionality*, 15(1), 3-15.

Crockett, J.B., & Kauffman, J.M. (1999). *The Least Restrictive Environment and It's Origins and Interpretations in Special Education*. Mahwah, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eiseman, L.T & Chamberlin, M. (2001). Implementing Self-Determination Activities: Lessons From Schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 22(3), 138-147.

Eisenman, L.T., & Tascione, L. (2002). "How Come Nobody Told Me?" Fostering Self-Realization Through a High School English Curriculum. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice* (Blackwell Publishing Limited), Feb., Vol. 17, Issue 1, p. 35.

Eisenman, L.T. (2007). Self-Determination Interventions: Building a Foundation for School Completion. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28(1), 2-8.

Erikson, E. H. Identity and the life cycle. (Whole issue.) *Psycho!. Issues* 1(1). 1959. 171 p.

Ernest, J., & Monroe, M., (2006) The effects of environment-based education on students' critical thinking skills and disposition toward critical thinking. *Environmental Education Research*, Jul2006, Vol. 12 Issue 3/4, p429-443.

Field, S., Hoffman, A., & Posch, M. (1997). Self-determination during adolescence: A developmental perspective. *Remedial and Special Education*, 8(5), 85-293.

Field, S., & Hoffman, A. (2002). Preparing Youth to Exercise Self-Determination: Quality Indicators of School Environments That Promote the Acquisition of Knowledge, Skills, and Beliefs Related to Self-Determination. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 13, 113-119.

Field, S., Sarver, M.D., & Shaw, S.F. (2003). Self-Determination. *Remedial & Special Education*, Nov/Dec, Vol. 24, Issue 6, pp. 339-349.

Deno, S.L., Fuchs, L.S.(1995). Counterpoint: Much Ado About Something (Though We're Not Sure It's Our Article): A Reply to Howell and Evans. *Exceptional Children*, Vol. 61, Issue 4, p. 397.

Getzel, E.E., & deFur, S. (1997). Transition planning for students with significant disabilities: Implications for student-centered planning. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 12, 39-48.

Gillespie, E.B., & Turnbull, A.P. (1983). It's My IEP! Involving students in the planning process. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 16, 26-29.

Grigal, M., & Test, D.W. (1997). An Evaluation of Transition Components of Individualized Education Programs. *Exceptional Children*, Spring, Vol. 63, Issue 3, p357.

Hallahan, D.P., & Kauffman, J.M. (1977). Labels, Categories, Behaviors: ED, LD, and EMR Reconsidered *Journal of Special Education*, Summer, Vol. 11 Issue 2.

Houchins, D.E. (2001). Developing the Self-Determination of Incarcerated Youth. *Journal of Correctional Education*, Dec., Vol. 52, Issue 4, p141-147.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20

U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.* (2004). (Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Jones, M. (2006). Teaching Self Determination: Empowered teachers, Empowered Students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Vol 39, No 1. pp. 12-17.

Locke, J. (1715). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

Martin, J.E., Marshall, L.H., Maxson, L., & Jerman, P. (1993). *Self-directed IEP: Teacher's manual*. Colorado Springs: University of Colorado, Center for Educational Research.

Martin, J.E., Marshall, L.H., & Sale, P. (2004). A 3-Year Student of Middle, Junior, and High School IEP Meetings. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 70(3), p. 285-297.

Mason, C., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. (2004). Implementation of Self-Determination Activities and Student Participation in IEPs. *Exceptional Children*, Summer, Vol. 70, Issue 4, pp. 441-451.

McGahee, M., Mason, C., Wallace, T., & Jones, B. (2001). Student-led IEPs: A Guide for student involvement. Arlington, Va., Council for Exceptional Children.

National Council on Disability. (2000). Transition and post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities: Closing the gaps to post-secondary education and employment. Washington, D.C.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities: Transition Summary. (1991, September). Vol 7.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, Washington, D.C., 1999.

Nirje, B. (1972). The Right to Self-determination. In W.E. Wolfensberger, *Normalization: The principle of normalization in human services* (pp. 177-193), Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

O'Leary, M.B. (2001). Access and opportunity. *Leadership*, 15313174, Mar/Apr, Vol. 30, Issue 4.

Osher, D., Morrison, G., & Bailey, G. (2003). Exploring the Relationship between Student Mobility and Dropout among Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 72, No. 1, pp. 79-96.

Piehler-Zickel, J., & Arnold, E. (2001). Putting the I in the IEP. *Educational Leadership*, 59, 71-73.

Powers, L.E., Turner, A., Westwood, D., Mateszweski, J., Wilson, R., & Phillips, A. (2001). TAKE CHARGE for the future: A Controlled field test of a model to promote student involvement in transition planning. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 24, 89-103.

Price, L., Gerber, P.J., & Mulligan, R. (2003). *Remedial & Special Education*, Nov/Dec, Vol. 24, Issue 6, pp. 350-358.

Redmond, S.M., & Hosp, J.L. (2008). Absenteeism in Students Receiving Services for CDs, LDs and EDs: A Macroscopic View of the Consequences of Disability. *Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools*. Volume 39. p. 97-103.

Roeser, M., & Midgely, C. (1996). Perceptions of the school psychological environment and early adolescents. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Sept., Vol. 88, Issue 3, p. 408.

Sawka, K.D., McCurdy, B.L., & Mannella, M.C. (2002). Strengthening Emotional Support Services: An Empirically Based Model For Training Teachers of Students with Behavior Disorders. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, Winter, Vol. 10, Issue 4, p. 223.

Scott, J. (1699). *The Christian Life*.

Sharpe, M.N., & Johnson, D.R. (2001). A 20/20 analysis of postsecondary support characteristics. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, Vol. 16, Issue 3/4, p. 169.

Sinclair, M.F., Christenson, S.L., & Thurlow, M.L. (2005). Promoting School Completion of Urban Secondary Youth with Emotional or Behavioral Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 465-482.

Snyder, E.P., & Shaprio, E.S. (1997). Teaching students with emotional/behavioral disorders the skills to participate in the development of their own IEPs. *Behavioral Disorders*, 22, 256-259.

Steinberg, Z., & Knitzer, J. (1992). Classrooms for Emotionally and Behaviorally Disturbed Students: Facing the Challenge. *Behavioral Disorders*, v17 n2, p. 145-56.

Thoma, C.A., Rogan, P., & Baker, S.R. (2001). Student Involvement in Transition Planning: Unheard voices. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 36, 16-29.

Thoma, C.A., Nathanson, R., Baker, S.R., & Tamura, R. (2002). Self-determination: What do special educators know and where do they learn it? *Remedial and Special Education*, 23, 242–247.

Turnball, A.P., & Turnball, R. (2006). Self-Determination: Is a Rose by any other name still a rose? *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(1) 1-6.

Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Garza, N., & Levine, P. (2005). After High School: A first Look at the Post School Experiences of Youth with Disabilities. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS- 2).

Walden, R.J. (2002). Teaching a Goal Attainment Process to University Students with Learning Disabilities. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2002). (UMI no. 3054049).

Wehmeyer, M.L. (1992). Self-determination and the education of students with mental retardation. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 27, 302-314.

Wehmeyer, M.L. (1996). Self-determination as an educational outcome: Why is it important to children, youth and adults with disabilities? In D.J. Sands & M.L. Wehmeyer (Eds.), *Self-determination across the life span: Independence and choice for people with disabilities* (pp. 15-34). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Wehmeyer, M., & Schwartz, M. (1997). Self-determination and positive adult outcomes: A follow-up study of youth with mental retardation or learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 245–255.

Wehmeyer, M., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). Teaching Self-Determination to Students with Disabilities: Basic Skills for Successful Transition. Brooks Publishing, Baltimore.

Wehmeyer, M.L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (2000). A National Survey of Teachers' Promotion of Self-Determination and Student-Directed Learning. *Journal of Special Education*, 34, 58-68.

Wehmeyer, M.L., & Schalock, R.L. (2001). Self-Determination and Quality of Life: Implications for Special Education Services and Supports, *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 0015511X, Apr2001, Vol. 33, Issue 8.

Wehmeyer, M.L., Abery, B., Mithaug, D.E., & Stancliffe, R.J. (2003). *Theory in self-determination: Foundations for educational practice*. Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas.

Wehmeyer, Michael L., Field, Sharon, Doren, Bonnie, Jones, Bonnie, & Mason, Christine. (2004). Self-Determination and Student Involvement in Standards-Based Reform. *Exceptional Children*, Summer, Vol. 70, Issue 4, p. 413-425.

Zigmond, N., Clay, K., Morocco, C.C., & Brigham, N. [IS THIS NOT "BRIGHAM"??] (2006). What Makes a Good High School a Good High School for students with disabilities? *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*. 21(3), 184-190.

Zimmerman, B. (2002). Achieving self-regulation: The trial and triumph of adolescence. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Academic motivation of adolescents* (pp. 1–27). Greenwich, Conn: Information Age.

Zimmerman, R.S., & Khoury, E.L. (1996). Teacher and parent perceptions of behavior problems. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Apr95, Vol. 23, Issue 2, p. 181.

Appendix A

Application of the Choice Maker Curriculum for Teaching Self-Determination Skills to Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities in a Private Day Setting

Student Interview PRE/POST

1. Do you know what a goal is?
2. Do you know what it means to meet a goal?
3. What types of goals have you met and set for yourself?
4. Have you ever tried to reach a goal and you couldn't?

- a. Do you know why you couldn't?
5. Do you know what your IEP is?
6. Does your IEP have goals on it?
- a. If yes- do you know if you have met those goals?
 - b. If no- d/c this question
7. Who helps you meet goals?
8. Have you ever been taught at school how to meet a goal?
- a. If yes- what did they teach you about
 - b. If no- d/c this question

Appendix B

Staff Interview PRE/POST

9. Do you think the students know what a goal is?
 - a. If yes- there are _____number of students participating. How many know what a goal is, in your opinion?

10. Do you think the students know what it means to meet a goal?
 - a. If yes- there are _____number of students participating. How many know what how to meet a goal , in your opinion?

11. Do you or have you offered any training in reaching goals? (PRE only)

12. Have you exposed the students to their IEP goals and objectives?

13. In summary what would you say the students know about their IEP?

14. Do you think the students could benefit from curriculum teaching how to make and reach goals? Pre only

15. How many of the students, in your opinion, now know what a goal is and how to meet it? POST only

16. How many of the students now know what their IEP is, in your opinion?

17. How has this curriculum could assist/assisted your students?

Appendix C

Phone Call Script:

Hi, this is _____ your student's social worker at school. I am calling because your student is eligible to participate in a research study with their class.

Can I tell you more about the study?

No- discontinue phone call and thank them for their time

Yes- the study will take place in the later part of April, all of May and June as well as summer session. Your student will receive training on how to set and make goals. Their progress will be charted and maintained confidentially and used to write a dissertation paper. Let me tell you about the study...

Information- the study is about how students in special education set and obtain goals. All the students will receive training on goal setting from a published curriculum and then assistance in tracking how many goals they can set and meet over a 4 week time period. The students will receive this training in their clinical groups and will not have any disruption to their day. The information gathered will be kept confidential and no names will be used. In addition to their goal achievement, we will also be recording their IQ, chronological age, gender and disability category along with a brief academic history. Choosing to participate or not participate does not in ANY WAY affect their academic standing. In addition, the time period being used is a clinical group period so students will not miss any class time. Should the student not participate they will attend a different clinical group at the same time.

Can I send you an information sheet and permission slip?

FAQ:

1. Does my student have to participate-
 - a. Answer- no they do not, but it is a published curriculum and may help your student develop skills.
2. Will this take my student out of class?
 - a. Answer- no students will receive this training in their already scheduled group therapy time.
3. Will my student's name be used?
 - a. Answer- no all information collected is confidential and there are no names of ID numbers used to trace the information back to the student.
4. Do you have anything I can read about this study?
 - a. Answer- yes, the school will be sending information flyers home.
5. How do I sign them up?
 - a. Answer- a permission slip will be sent home, you must sign it and return it.
6. If they do not participate what will they do during that time?
 - a. Answer- group will occur with students who are participating and those who are not will be in a separate group so that every student's schedule remains the same.

Phone Call Script

George Washington University Research Study

Students are invited to participate in a research study about how students in special education set and obtain goals. All the students will receive training on goal setting from a published curriculum and then assistance in tracking how many goals they can set and meet over a 4 week time period. The students will receive this training in their clinical groups and will not have any disruption to their day. The information gathered will be kept confidential and no names will be used. In addition to their goal achievement, we will also be recording their IQ, chronological age, gender and disability category along with a brief academic history.

FAQ:

Does my student have to participate-

Answer- no they do not, but it is a published curriculum and may help your student develop skills.

Will this take my student out of class?

Answer- no students will receive this training in their already scheduled group therapy time.

Will my student's name be used?

Answer- no all information collected is confidential and there are no names of ID numbers used to trace the information back to the student.

Do you have anything I can read about this study?

Answer- yes, the school will be sending information flyers home.

How do I sign them up?

Answer- a permission slip will be sent home, you must sign it and return it.

If they do not participate what will they do during that time?

Answer- group will occur with students who are participating and those who are not will be in a separate group so that every student's schedule remains the same.

Is the study approved and being monitored by GWU?

Answer- yes, the study will receive clearance through the office of human research at GWU and be monitored by a faculty member.