

The Emergence of Self-Determination in Young Adults with Intellectual Disability Participating in Project SEARCH

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Abstract

Obstacles encountered by young adults with intellectual disability (ID) during the transition from high school to post-school employment have great potential to limit an individual's opportunity and/or capacity for self-determination with regard to employment. This qualitative study examines the challenges to self-determination experienced by a group of nine interns with ID during a one-year Project SEARCH internship program in a Kentucky distribution center. Through field observations, interviews, photographs, goal-reporting, and administration of the *AIR Self-Determination Scale*, challenges to self-determination were identified. These included challenges related to communication; social competence in the workplace; work skill development; emotional regulation; and seeing oneself outside of the current work experience. Workplace interactions, experiences, instructional strategies, and individualized supports were implemented collaboratively among interns, supervisors, co-workers, instructor, and employment specialist during the program year. As a result, interns demonstrated positive growth and development in the characteristics of self-determined people related to the identified challenges.

Keywords: transition, intellectual disability, self-determination

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Historically, young adults with intellectual disability (ID) have met with significant obstacles when transitioning from high school education services to post-school employment. The obstacles encountered range broadly but can include difficulty receiving adequately supported job training for skill development, accessing long-term employment supports, maintaining reliable transportation, and experiencing preconceived ideas or attitudes about competence for work (Gormley, 2015; Daston, Riehle, & Rutkowski, 2012). In turn, these obstacles have limited an individual's capacity and opportunity to self-determine (Mithaug, 2005). Recognizing the pervasiveness of these obstacles, a Kentucky public school district (KPSD) identified the need for improved support services for high school students with ID and development of teacher capacity to support the transition from school to employment. The KPSD implemented a Project SEARCH employment training site at a local distribution center. This study presents an examination of factors contributing to growth in an individual's self-determination through an exploration of instruction and experiences (Strater, 2017).

Project SEARCH is an international program that provides a one-year, full-immersion work experience for young adults with ID who are in their last year of eligibility for high school services. Program participation provides a fully inclusive work experience through a collaborative effort among a local business, education agency, vocational rehabilitation agency (VR), and job-coaching service provider that effectively creates linkages with service providers and connections for individuals in the local community. Curriculum includes instruction in daily and independent living skills, social competence, self-determination, and employability. Students receive instruction on-site at a host business through a combination of classroom instruction and internships. A supported employment service agency works alongside the student interns to provide job training, development, and placement services at the completion of the program (Rutkowski, Daston,

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Van Kuiken, & Riehle, 2006). From 2014-2017, Project SEARCH has consistently maintained a 70%-75% employment rate for the over 2,000 individuals with disabilities served each year (Project SEARCH, 2018) compared to the 35% employment rate attributed to those with disabilities in the general population (Kraus, Lauer, Coleman & Houtenville, 2018).

The need for school districts to implement programs like Project SEARCH has grown out of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and reauthorization (2004) that requires transition planning in high school as a portion of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) every year starting at age 16 or younger if necessary. Wehmeyer (2011) expressed that effective transition planning models are strengths-based and promote self-determination. Furthermore, the interventions implemented to promote desired work and living outcomes should be geared toward enhancing personal capacity and modifying the contexts in which people function. This requires a significant shift away from programs designed to provide services to individuals based upon characteristics associated with their disability toward providing customized supports for a person within an environment of his/her own choosing.

Project SEARCH seeks to support this shift by providing educational experiences that include instruction in social competence, skills for independent living, academics, employability, and career and technical training that are taught in multiple settings in the classroom, community, and workplace (Rutkowski et al., 2006). By providing employment supports and opportunity to practice, the Project SEARCH model assists individuals with ID in working toward improvement in the ability to set and act on goals related to employment. Interventions and accommodations to promote these post-school outcomes are specifically geared toward improving personal capacity for employment and modifying work environments to suit the needs of the individual. Fundamental to its design, Project SEARCH provides individualized supports on-site at a local business to provide an avenue for building on an individual's strengths and helping him/her grow in capacities needed to support self-determination with regard to employment (Rutkowski et al., 2006).

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In considering the many aspects of self-determined people, it is evident that a variety of environmental and personal factors can influence an individual's opportunity or capacity to be self-determined (Lee et al., 2012). "People who are self-determined self-initiate and self-regulate action to solve problems, make decisions, and set goals that impact their lives" (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Burke, & Palmer, 2017, p. 2). Wehmeyer (2007) defined self-determined behavior as "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference" (p. 3). Shogren et al. (2017) affirm the notion of causal agency and describe several essential characteristics of self-determined people in terms of: 1) volitional action, inclusive of autonomy and self-initiation; 2) agentic action, inclusive of self-regulation, self-direction, and pathways thinking; and 3) action-control beliefs, inclusive of psychological empowerment, self-realization, and control expectancy. The purpose of this study was to explore factors with the potential to influence causal agency, identify instructional supports, and examine outcomes.

Over the last 25 years, the use of models for instruction and curricula to promote the characteristics of self-determination have proved effective for developing self-determination skills (Burke et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2003; Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994). Self-determination skills are constantly being taught, learned, applied, and adapted across all settings in which an individual engages (Martin, Mithaug, Husch, Oliphint, & Frazier, 2002). Improvement in self-determination develops within learning environments that encourage, nurture, and support self-determination values, thinking, and behavior (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Furthermore, engagement in quality learning experiences and environments during high school can positively impact an individual's development of self-determination skills (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, Phelps, & Carter, 2012).

While the Project SEARCH curriculum is not explicitly focused on instructional models for self-determination, by the integrated nature of the program, it lends itself to quality, incidental opportunities for instruction and growth supporting

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the essential characteristics of self-determined people. Interns have opportunities to communicate with coworkers and supervisors, independently solve work-related problems, advocate for their own needs, set and work toward performance goals, self-regulate for pace and production, and work toward independence (Strater, 2017). Because of this, the following research question has been addressed:

How do experiences, interactions, and supports encountered during Project SEARCH contribute to growth in an individual's capacity and opportunity to self-determine?

Literature Review

Because of the bleak employment outlook for individuals with ID, it is necessary to examine strategies and factors that are linked to improved employment and independent living outcomes for individuals with ID. Over time, research has confirmed that self-determination has been linked to positive academic and adult outcomes for individuals with and without disabilities (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenbark, & Little, 2015; Lee et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2003).

Numerous group and single-subject studies (Burke et al., 2018; Powers, et al., 2001; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000; Cross, Cooke, Wood & Test, 1999; Ezell, Klein, & Ezell-Powell, 1999; Fullerton & Coyne, 1999; Lehmann, Bassett, Sands, Spencer & Gliner, 1999; Hoffman & Field, 1995; Abery & Rudrud, 1995; and Browning & Nave, 1993) indicate that direct teaching using classroom or training curricula for instruction in various self-determination skills resulted in improvement in one or more of the following skills: choice-making, planning, decision-making, problem-solving, self-regulation, goal-setting and attainment, and self-advocacy.

Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, and Wood (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 22 studies on self-determination interventions that further demonstrated that self-determination can be taught and learned through use of specific strategies. The most common strategies appearing throughout the analysis included individual involvement in transition planning, Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, direct

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instruction in self-determination, and person-centered planning. A subsequent meta-analysis of 34 studies on the effectiveness of such interventions to promote self-determination indicated a need for analysis of goal attainment on transition-related goals in an inclusive setting (Hagiwara, Shogren, & Leko, 2017).

Furthermore, use of self-determination curricula has been linked to improved self-determination skills for individuals with disabilities. *The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)* is a model of instruction designed to help students become causal agents in their own lives (Shogren, et al., 2017). The focus of the model is to persistently regulate problem solving in order to meet life goals, and implementation has consistently had positive impact on the development of self-determination in individuals with disabilities (Wehmeyer, et al., 2000).

Hendricks and Wehman (2009), as well as Stewart, Gorter, and Freeman (2013), further described several themes emerging from research linked to improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities. These themes included instruction for building skill capacity among youth with disabilities for life skills, self-advocacy, and social interaction; community experiences that provide a person with social interactions and opportunities to build skills for future adult life; and personal and environmental factors working together to influence development and independence.

Method

This sequential exploratory study employed constructivist grounded theory to analyze qualitative data collected from a variety of sources during the Project SEARCH year. Data sources included: 1) pre/post-test survey and open response data collected using the *American Institute for Research (AIR) Self-Determination Scale*; 2) photographs taken by the interns at the beginning and end of the internship; 3) transcription of pre/post intern interviews; and 4) field observation notes. Nine student interns, their parents, an employment specialist, and program instructor participated in this eight-month study. The interns, selected by committee from Kentucky public school district students with ID who applied for Project SEARCH during the 2015–2016 school year, had completed at least four years of high

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school and ranged in age from 18–20 years of age (Strater, 2017). The interns could be classified as having a moderate or severe ID which, according to the IDEA eligibility criteria, indicates that the participants experienced significant sub-average intellectual functioning concurrent with deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the developmental period (United States Department of Education, 2004).

Wang and Burris (1994) developed photovoice to empower communities of people to influence policies that affected them. It is a method by which people can identify, characterize, and grow their community through photography. Photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to show their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote dialogue about important issues through discussion around photographs, and (3) to influence policy (Wang and Burris, 1997). By inviting the interns to take photographs of their experiences during Project SEARCH and encouraging them to select photographs to place in a journal, use of photovoice became an opportunity for the interns to document their own experiences while in the program. The interns then participated in one-on-one interviews at the beginning and end of the program using photograph journals.

The *AIR Self-Determination Scale* is based on Mithaug's work in self-determined learning theory and focuses on how individuals manage challenges and opportunities to gain what they want and need (Shogren et al., 2008). Each scale has two sections: ratings and open response. The ratings were used to provide information on perception of an individual's capacity and opportunity to self-determine, and the open response provided an opportunity for all participants to describe goals on which the intern was working. Weekly field notes collected from August 2015 through February 2016 extended the body of data available for analysis. Activities conducted during field visits included observations and informal interviews with teachers, employment specialists, supervisors, parents, co-workers, and interns (Strater, 2017).

The varied data collection methods established a rich base of data over the course of the program year. While interview is the typical tool used by grounded theorists for gathering data

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(Charmaz, 2014), information from rating scales, informal conversations, and observations in the classroom and during job rotations provided support and informed what was established through the interview process. The images collected through photovoice became the visual support for conversation about the experience. Goals written by all participants provided insight into challenges and growth experienced by the interns. Content of intern goals and the goals of the parents, instructor, and employment specialist were examined for alignment, similarity, and difference. Field notes provided insight into daily interactions and supports as well as an opportunity to see, in action, what was evidenced in photographs, interviews, and open response.

Constructivist grounded theory provided a structure for coding and data analysis to work toward a general theory regarding self-determination and the interaction of the interns with the supports in place through Project SEARCH (Creswell, 2009). This design method adopts Glaser and Strauss's (1967) approach of induction, constant comparison, emergence, and open-endedness while keeping in mind that the researcher's perspective and interactions are an inherent part of the research (Charmaz, 2014). The process employed the following steps: 1) conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously; 2) analyze actions and processes rather than themes and structure through coding; 3) use constant comparison; 4) draw on all forms of data to create new conceptual categories; 5) use systematic data analysis to develop analytic categories; 6) emphasize construction of a theory; 7) take part in theoretical sampling; 8) search for variation in categories or processes; and 9) work toward developing a category rather than covering a specific topic (Charmaz, 2014).

Results

The coding process followed initial, focused, and theoretical phases. During the initial phase, the principal investigator coded for action and process, which required the use of gerunds and action words to summarize and name the data collected from photographs, interviews, *AIR Self-Determination Scale* open response, and field notes (Charmaz, 2014). Use of line-by-line coding provided the base for the later emergence of theoretical

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categories through the constant comparison method. The initial coding phase resulted in hundreds of individual codes that could be compared, contrasted, grouped, and synthesized. Throughout the coding process, memo-writing played a central role in constructing theoretical categories, serving as an intermediate step between coding and writing by prompting comparisons and analyses of the data early in the research process (Charmaz, 2014).

A variety of factors with the potential to influence self-determination emerged through the initial coding process. A challenge to self-determination was defined by its potential bearing on the essential characteristics of a self-determined person, which in turn influences an individual's capacity and/or opportunity to take action to solve problems, make decisions, and set goals (Shogren et al., 2017). During initial interviews, open response from the *AIR Self-Determination Scale*, and field observations, challenges related to communication; the ability to see oneself outside of the current work experience; emotional regulation; social interaction; work ethic; positive outlook on work; physical management of job tasks; and independence emerged through codes appearing at least once across three or more interns.

For the next step in the analysis, the principal investigator utilized focused coding to develop new descriptive codes by incorporating many of the initial codes. This step of the process required comparing, sorting, and synthesizing individual codes into more inclusive categories (Charmaz, 2014). Through this process, specific challenges, interactions, and supports experienced across interns could be preliminarily identified and described. A description of process began to emerge; however, focused codes still contained a wide range of ideas that needed to be examined for pervasiveness and relationship.

Focused coding allowed the manifestation of factors potentially influencing self-determination to be consolidated into five main categories: challenges related to 1) communication; 2) independence in acquisition of certain job tasks; 3) difficulty seeing oneself outside of the current work experience; 4) emotional regulation; and 5) social interactions in the workplace.

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Table 1

Frequency of codes related to the manifestation of challenges to self-determination.

Identified Challenges	Number of interns experiencing challenge	Number of codes assigned to challenges in initial interviews and field notes
Communication	9	170
Work skill development	9	38
Social interaction	6	42
Emotional regulation	4	45
Seeing oneself outside of current experience	4	16

Furthermore, coding of field observation data showed that interns participated in four categories of instructional strategies and supports related to the various challenges to self-determination. Table 2 summarizes strategies in each of the following categories: 1) instructor mediated supports, meaning that the learning experience was led by an instructor and participated in by the intern; 2) intern-instructor mediated supports, which are described as supports that were led equally by the instructor and intern; 3) coworker mediated supports, which imply support and instruction led by a coworker; and 4) co-intern mediated supports, which are supports that were led by the other interns.

Table 2

Levels of support and interaction.

Instructor mediated	Task analysis, explicit instruction, performance feedback, positive reinforcement, modeling, pre-correction, over-correction, prompting, visual supports, corrective feedback, guided practice
Intern-instructor mediated	Goal-setting, guided practice, self-assessment
Coworker mediated	Modeling, corrective feedback, positive reinforcement
Co-intern mediated	Re-teaching, modeling, positive reinforcement, prompting, peer-led feedback

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Among all interactions and supports indicated, a weekly goal-setting strategy used by the interns, instructor, and employment specialist was the most returned to instructional strategy noted during weekly field observations. Led by the intern and instructor equally, use of this strategy resulted with each intern crafting a short-term goal and articulating strategies supportive of meeting the goal. Interns engaged in daily self-assessment of work toward the goal and adjusted their approach based on the results of the assessment. Goals were documented by the instructor on index cards, placed in front of the interns on the classroom work table, and referenced throughout the week. Of the 41 goals set by the interns in conjunction with the instructor, 22% referenced skills unique to working in a distribution center. The remaining 78% of goals referenced employability skills that could be transferable to other work settings.

Theoretical coding provided the opportunity to integrate focused codes, demonstrate relationships between substantive codes, create form, and add precision and clarity (Charmaz, 2014). What emerged was evidence of a process defined in four robust categories of data addressing the research question: 1) the discovery of challenges to opportunity and capacity for self-determination; 2) manifestation of the identified challenges in the workplace; 3) identification of experiences, interactions, and supports connected to the challenges; and 4) evidence of growth in opportunity and capacity to self-determine. Furthermore, theoretical sampling provided an opportunity to strengthen and saturate the conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2014) through a process of developing and asking intern-specific interview questions during the final interviews. This process offered a unique opportunity to analyze intern perceptions of their experiences during the Project SEARCH year.

Evidence of Growth

The path through Project SEARCH was different for each intern, which makes defining the scope of skill development difficult to quantify. However, the combination of data sources provided evidence that the interns demonstrated or experienced observable change regarding their identified challenges to

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self-determination. The interns held to their individual strengths throughout the year while broadening and deepening the abilities needed to engage in causal agency with regard to employment. When asked during the final interview, “What does having a job mean to you?” themes of pride and independence permeated intern responses, indicating themes of psychological empowerment and self-realization (Shogren et al., 2017).

Table 3

What working and having a job means to me.

Attitudes and accomplishments	Things I can acquire or do	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can be proud that I have a job • Well, uh, it was hard • Special • Awesome • I can work hard • Get the job done • I work full-time • Work full-time • Doing what you need to do • Do everything you want to do with the money—full-time money • Great job • I'm so smart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, I'll get stuff • Money • Work • I can have my first paycheck • Earn money • A car • Buy my food • Buy gas for my moped • Clothes • Make a lot of money • Live in a house • Have a car and vehicle • Live on my own • Get married • Personal life • Have a lot of money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be polite • Be respectful • Be good to each other • You've got to take care of your customers and everything • You're done for the rest of the day • Stay out of my business

Furthermore, evidence of a four-step learning process emerged during the data analysis: 1) upon entering Project SEARCH, the interns possessed individual learning, communication, and behavioral strengths in addition to factors that had the potential to limit self-determination with regard to employment; 2) the factors were informally identified and prioritized by the instructor, then specifically addressed through experiences, interactions, and collaborative instructional strategies implemented by the instructor, employment specialist, supervisors, coworkers, and interns; 3) the interns progressed toward self-awareness of individual challenges to self-determination, and through their

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efforts in planning and utilizing strategies, they developed a sense of pride in their individual progress; and 4) the interns demonstrated or experienced observable change regarding the identified challenges to self-determination (Strater, 2017).

Alignment of stakeholder goals from the AIR Self-Determination Scale. From the initial administration of the *AIR Self-Determination Scale*, all interns reported goals directly related to obtaining long-term employment or for which having employment would make the goal attainable. The instructor and employment specialist reported work- and soft-skill development goals addressing what they saw as barriers to employment for the interns. Parents focused primarily on independence in the home and developing fulfilling interests. Initial parent-composed goals included few references to intern capacity or opportunity for employment.

In the final administration, intern goals remained stable in content; however, the goals reported by the parents, instructor, and employment specialist aligned much more closely with intern-identified goals, focusing on independence with transportation, obtaining employment, and other soft skill development. Goal alignment between parents and interns indicates a shift in parent perspective on intern capacity and opportunity to seek employment.

For example, the language used in one final open response composed by a parent demonstrated a shift from intern dependence on others for goal achievement to active independence in completing the steps needed to achieve an outcome. In the initial goal, the parent communicated that her son wanted to install a radio on his moped and had selected one to purchase. He was then waiting for a family friend to complete the installation. In the final goal, the parent wrote about all of the steps the intern was taking to independently achieve full-time employment, including completion of routines to prepare for the work day, commitment to being a dependable employee, and communicating with his employer (Strater, 2017).

Evidence from final interviews. The principal investigator analyzed final interviews for information connected to intern strengths as well as to the challenges to self-determination

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discovered during the initial phase of data collection. Compared to the initial interviews, the final interviews were characterized by significantly fewer prompts from the interviewer to elicit information. Differences observed from initial to final interview included increased use of workplace vocabulary; longer length of utterance; increased responses directly related to the question asked; articulation of strategies for work, emotional regulation, and social interactions; and further-developed descriptions of work skills and responsibilities.

For example, during the initial interview, one intern frequently used the phrase “I don’t know” in response to direct questions. The instructor identified this as a communication challenge to be addressed through support and interaction because of the impact “I don’t know” has on a supervisor’s perception of the intern’s knowledge and understanding of job responsibilities. In her initial interview, the phrase appeared 28 times. After instruction in communication over the course of the year, the phrase appeared only 9 times in the final interview (Strater, 2017).

Another example indicating a significant area of growth occurred among the four interns who experienced challenges with emotional regulation. One intern, who had demonstrated difficulty regulating his reactions when something unexpected occurred in his immediate environment and when transitioning between departments during the work day, had participated in individualized instruction supporting the development of additional emotional regulation strategies. When asked during the final interview about how he regulated during unexpected events and transitions, he was able to articulate several strategies that he had adopted including: putting his hands in his pockets; walking slowly during transitions; “catching” his breath; and using replacement phrases like “oh, man” or “oh, dang it” when something unexpected occurred.

Coding of field observations indicated supports, interactions, and skill development related to all areas of identified challenge; coding of final interviews saturated each category with intern perspective and self-assessment of skill development related to the areas of challenge. Tables 4 and 5 show evidence of growth collected during final interviews above the baseline established

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during initial interviews and field observations, indicating growth in autonomy, self-direction, self-regulation, and self-realization (Shogren et. al, 2017).

Table 4

Evidence of skill development organized by intern.

Identified Challenges	Number of interns experiencing challenge	Number of interns with codes demonstrating skill development related to identified challenge
Communication	9	9
Work skill development	9	9
Social interaction	6	6
Emotional regulation	4	4
Seeing oneself outside of current experience	4	4

Table 5

Evidence of skill development organized by code.

Identified Challenges	Number of codes assigned to challenges in initial interviews and field notes	Number of codes assigned to skill development from baseline in final interview
Communication	170	28
Work skill development	38	70
Social interaction	42	23
Emotional regulation	45	4
Seeing oneself outside of current experience	16	12

Limitations

This study is focused on nine students in a large Kentucky public school district. It is not intended to be generalized beyond the students participating in the study or to any other community agencies serving adults and youth with mild to severe ID. The challenges to self-determination discovered among this particular group of interns and the instructional strategies used by this instructor may not be representative of other Project SEARCH sites currently in operation based on differences across individuals and differences in instructional style.

Implications for Practice

Ward (2005) states, “Self-determination is...an interplay between the individual and society: individuals with disabilities must have the abilities (capacities) and opportunities to be self-determined. Society must give individuals with disabilities the skills, opportunities, and support to do so” (p. 111). We have the moral obligation to correct systematic suppression and unfair treatment of those with unequal opportunity to self-determine (Mithaug, 2005). Improvement in self-determination develops within learning environments that encourage, nurture, and support self-determination values, thinking, and behavior (Sitlington, et al., 2000), and the Project SEARCH model establishes a quality educational setting for the encouragement and nurturing of skills needed to improve independence in thinking, doing, and adjusting.

The Project SEARCH model provides a framework for working toward equalization of opportunity for individuals with ID. Implementers must work tirelessly toward intentionality and continuous improvement of instruction in order to maximize individual outcomes. Focus on opportunity for intern engagement within the work setting should be a driving force behind the development of supports, instruction, and experiences during the Project SEARCH year (Strater, 2017). Using the essential characteristics of self-determined people defined by Shogren et al. (2017) as a guide for prioritizing needed instructional interactions and supports, specific recommendations for practice include:

1. Upon entering Project SEARCH, interns should be observed for the purpose of determining individual learning, communication, social, and behavioral strengths as well as characteristics that have the potential to limit causal agency;
2. Challenges to self-determination should be identified and prioritized, then intentionally addressed systematically, repeatedly, and consistently through inclusive experiences and interactions, evidence-based practices in development of self-determination, and collaborative instructional strategies implemented by the instructor, employment specialist, coworkers, and interns;

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3. Intern effort toward planning and utilizing strategies to address factors with the potential to limit self-determination should be encouraged; and
4. Observable change regarding their individual prioritized goals should be documented.

Secondary education institutions are uniquely positioned to provide supports, interactions, and experiences accessible through the Project SEARCH model (Strater, 2017).

Operating under the IDEA and in collaboration with community agencies, public school districts have access to financial and personnel resources to offer experiences inclusive of contextual, natural, and social supports, which can have a positive impact on self-determination within the changing expectations of the real-world environment (Hughes et al., 1997). In order for development of self-determination to occur at a high level, secondary teachers of students with disabilities must be prepared for discerning individual challenges to self-determination and implementing effective, evidence-based instructional strategies. They must take full advantage of the opportunity for practice across multiple inclusive settings and continually assess the effectiveness of incidental learning experiences in support of self-determination.

Furthermore, liberal arts teacher education programs are situated to take an expanded role in the preparation of teachers for the tasks of transition education. Turning a critical eye to the contexts in which individuals with ID live, learn, and work should fully inform the way in which educators prepare to enter the field. Strauss (1968) once said, "Liberal education consists in listening to still and small voices" (p. 25). Practicum experiences focused on student voice and the impact of individual self-determination on post-secondary education, employment, and living opportunities in the local community for individuals with ID should move to the forefront, or at the very least expand, the transition practicum experiences required of in-training teachers. It is not enough to understand effective transition planning in the abstract. Experiencing Project SEARCH and other inclusive transition programs has the potential to promote a great sense of urgency toward inclusive transition education practices and support of instruction in the development of self-determination.

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