

SELF-DETERMINATION BEHAVIORS AFTER INSTRUCTION
IN CHOICEMAKER CURRICULUM

by

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Self-determination skills are essential for the success of students in special education after high school, yet too many students leave high school without those skills. I seek to add to the body of literature related to the self-determination of students with mild disabilities in high school. Utilizing time-sampling data, I determined if students exhibit an increase in self-determination behaviors as compared with those who have not been involved in the ChoiceMaker curriculum. The five-week long curriculum consisted of nine sessions. I collected the time-sampling data during IEP meetings to evaluate students' progress as part of their IEP goals and determined the mean value of each groups' participation to determine if there is a significant difference in the average amount of times students displayed self-determination behaviors. The purpose was to determine if this curriculum increases self-determination behaviors during a students' IEP meeting.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

School professionals stress the importance of self-determination for all students, and particularly for students who are identified with disabilities. Even today, experts seek to identify the most impactful strategies and curriculum to ensure that students graduate with the skills needed to make their own decisions and have the autonomy needed to lead successful lives. However, students are walking away from schools with a lack of experience and skill in self-advocacy and self-determination (Wagner, 2016). Schools need to implement curriculum designed to teach these skills. Through this research, I sought to identify whether teaching Martin and Marshall's (1995) ChoiceMaker curriculum led to an increase in self-determination behavior during high school students' IEP meetings.

Background Information

Deci and Ryan (1985) determined that intrinsic motivation produced higher results when completing a specific task than did a reward system. This changed the then-current viewpoint that rewards were the best motivators. Deci and Ryan developed the Theory of Self-Determination which expressed that in order to be able to practice intrinsic motivation, a person must have independence, capability and a connection, or personal investment (Deci, 1985). This means that individuals need certain skills to express self-determination and realize success. These are skills that can be taught. Since then, more researchers such as Mason et al. (2004), Martin et al. (2006), Hawbaker (2007), Cavendish et al. (2016), and Davis & Cumming (2019) have analyzed the most effective way increase individuals' capacity for self-determination behavior, especially as it relates to education. Students, especially those who are identified with a disability, must learn self-determination skills in order to be successful once they exit school. Some researchers are examining teacher preparatory programs to determine how to best support teachers in educating youth in self-determination (Nevin et al., 2002).

Others are evaluating the effectiveness of various curricula to find the most evidence-based and meaningful method of teaching students (Seo et. al.,2015).

While researchers agree about the long-term positive impact of building self-determination in students enrolled in special education, there is less consensus about the most effective methods and strategies for support (Benitez et al., 2005; Hawbaker, 2007; Martin et al., 2006; Mason et al., 2004). Researchers at times point to teacher preparatory programs, state mandates, specific school districts, and individual teachers or curricula as the solution. Though some curricula exist, there has been little research to support each of the curriculum. Without this knowledge, teachers lack a solid, evidence-based curriculum and are at a disadvantage in supporting students' self-determination. More work must be done in order to confirm or negate whether a specific curriculum is effective in increasing a student's self-determination skills.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to determine whether a specific curriculum will increase high school special education students' self-determination behaviors during their IEP meeting. This study will utilize Martin and Marshall's (1995) ChoiceMaker curriculum. I will conduct this research in a rural school in a North Central State. According to the 2018-2019 school report card, the race/ethnicity distribution at the high school is approximately 89% White, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 2% two or more races, 1% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and Black or African American. Approximately 12% of high school students are identified as having a disability, 26% as economically disadvantaged, and 2% as English language learners. Each student has been enrolled in the same district for at least five years and is in their first year at the high school. There were six total participants, all of whom have been identified with a disability. I identified whether the use of the ChoiceMaker curriculum increased students' self-determination behaviors during their IEP meeting by tallying and analyzing the amount of times they spoke at sixty second intervals throughout each meeting. More information about research methods is located in Chapter 3. Taking the mean data from

the treatment group and control group, I was able to determine the difference in average amounts of time each group spoke, which I have delineated in Chapter 4. After collecting and data, I analyzed the difference of the mean between the two groups to determine there was a significant difference in participation. The findings and implications for practice and research are located in Chapter 5.

School professionals must have meaningful and evidence-based self-determination strategies and curriculum to support the success of students with disabilities. I seek to deepen the understanding of one specific curriculum, adding to the body of knowledge about which curriculum is most effective at supporting students in utilizing self-determination behaviors.

Definitions

Benitez and his colleagues explain that self-determined people use skills and beliefs which enable them to act independently and make their own decisions (Benitez et al., 2005) in order to clearly indicate the definition for self-determination.

Students with EBD refers to students who are identified through IEP teams as a student with an emotional and behavioral disorder. This does not necessarily mean that the student has a medical diagnosis, only that they have qualified as a student with an emotional behavioral disorder within the education system. The same can be said for students who are identified with a learning disability, in this paper referred to as a student with LD.

IDEA (2004) refers to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which ensures children with disabilities receive free and appropriate public education as well as access to related services.

Chapter 2: Student Led Planning: A Literature Review

Individuals have the right to determine their roles in society. Students must experience self-determination while in school to successfully transition to life after secondary education, especially students with a disability. Student-led IEPs enable students to engage in their current learning as well as their future plans and ultimately supports their ability to make decisions and be successful after high school in the greater community (Nevin et al., 2002). Determining how to properly support students in self-determination behaviors during their IEP meetings is essential (Martin et al., 2006). One way to accomplish this is by utilizing a curriculum that supports students' knowledge of and skills related to their IEP meetings, such as Martin and his colleagues' nine-week curriculum, *Choice-Maker Self-Determination Curriculum* (Martin et al., 2006). Because of the limited number of studies conducted to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum, it is helpful to conduct an additional study to determine if this curriculum will enable students to demonstrate self-determination behaviors during their IEP meeting.

In this literature review, I address three areas related to students' exhibiting self-determination behaviors. In the first section I focus on motivation and self-determination. The second section is student-led planning and teacher support. The third section is implementation strategies and procedures.

Motivation and Self-Determination

Pritchard et. al. (1977) conducted a study to analyze the impact of extrinsic reward on intrinsic motivation. Twenty-eight college students in a psychology class engaged in a study to determine if being paid to solve chess problems would result in more effort than a group that was not paid and had no other offered extrinsic rewards. Researchers measured effort based on time spent on the chess problems during their break time. They concluded that the unpaid group spent more time working on the chess problems during the break time and therefore that extrinsic rewards can reduce intrinsic motivation. Limitations of the study include the low number of participants and that all of the participants were already at least somewhat familiar

with chess, and therefore may have had stronger motivation than another population sample. Another limitation may be looking mainly at the break time may be shortsighted as both groups performed better in the second session as compared with the first, showing an increase in motivation while the groups were in session. Pritchard and his colleagues demonstrated the theory that extrinsic rewards are not necessarily enough to support intrinsic motivation. Clearly, one must consider other influences when improving intrinsic motivation and self-determination. One of those influences is likely that a person is equipped with knowledge and skills to successfully advocate and make their own decisions.

Benitez et. al. (2005) conducted a study with five students with EBD at an alternative school to determine if the three-phase Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) would lead to career and vocational goal attainment. They found that students with EBD need access to self-determination skills and strategies in order to be successful after high school. They also determined that all subjects progressed towards their goal and reported being content with their accomplishments. Limitations include the restricted time to conduct the study given that it was towards the end of the year and the small amount of participants. Benitez and her colleagues indicated that teaching students using a support model is effective in increasing self-determination skills. They were able to determine that students with EBD can improve self-determination skills through the use of supportive lessons (Benitez et. al., 2005). After this work, additional and related research added to the body of knowledge of how to support students in special education to display more self-determination behaviors.

For instance, Roth et. al. (2007) conducted a study that investigated the correlation between teachers who exhibited self-determination behaviors and their students' self-determination behaviors. Participants included 132 teachers and 1255 students in third through sixth grade in Israel. Researchers used questionnaires for students and teachers to determine the degree to which they feel autonomous motivation. Roth and his colleagues found that teachers who identified as having more motivation for teaching support students' self-motivation

to learn. Limitations to Roth and his colleagues' work included having only women teachers within the sample, using questionnaires instead of observations to analyze autonomous motivation, and potentially having a better understanding of the teachers' overall knowledge and skills, and that relationship to their motivation. The researchers support the idea that self-motivation can lead to positive outcomes and further the point that students need to engage in self-determination behaviors during their IEP meetings. Knowing the positive impact of self-determined teachers on students is not enough to indicate what motivates students to be self-determined.

In addition to showing self-determination behaviors, teachers can support students by offering a rationale. Jang (2008) conducted a study of 136 college student subjects who worked on a low-interest assignment for twenty minutes. He found that students that were given explicit rationale for doing the assignment displayed more self-regulation, strategizing, and on-task behavior. A limitation of Jang's study is that the study only incorporated one set of activities in a single time period, instead of analyzing the effect over a longer time span. Jang adds to the body of literature about self-determination in that students who are given rationales are more likely to produce quality work. This can be related to students' self-determination abilities during IEP meetings in that, when students are provided background information and a rationale for the IEP meeting, they may be more invested and able to demonstrate self-determination behaviors during the meeting itself.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the methods used to determine self-determination abilities in students is an accurate measurement regardless of the disability label. Seo and his colleagues analyzed the data from 724 participants with the label of either LD or EBD by using a two-group confirmatory factor analysis. They determined that *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale* rating system can be appropriately used for students with LD and students with EBD as the rating system will provide accurate data for both. Limitations include a lack of knowledge about the significance of each students' EBD disability and, according to Seo et. al. (2015) a

generally small number of participants. Seo and researchers argue that there are accurate and appropriate methods to measuring students' self-determination that include a rating system. They support the notion that it is essential for us to further our understanding and abilities in supporting students with disabilities to demonstrate self-determination behaviors during their IEP meetings.

Teacher Support of Student-Led Planning

Student-led planning refers to the autonomy students need to create their own goals and accomplish their own tasks. Because students are still learning to be independent, it is crucial that teachers not only support students but also provide students with the skills and strategies needed for them to successfully accomplish tasks.

Arizona State University-West modified a four semester teacher education program to include self-directed IEPs as part of a perseverance curriculum to teach students in special education. The university conducted this with pre-service teachers, who had different levels of experience in schools, and included five college courses related to teaching self-determination, working with families as equal participants, and facilitating student-led IEPs. The researchers' findings were based on survey data collected at the completion of the teacher education program. The results were that teachers better defined self-determination and reported more confidence in facilitating student-led IEPs. The researchers indicated that success from a specific case study of a seventeen-year-old male exemplifies the effectiveness of the teacher education program (Nevin et al., 2002). Nevin et al. have shown an effective method for supporting teacher candidates' abilities to define self-determination, facilitate lessons that support this, and coordinate student-led IEP meetings. A shortcoming of this could be that the researchers did not collect student data while teachers were in the field, limiting the certainty that the teacher preparation program was effective, especially long-term. Still, the researchers' conclusions support the idea that training pre-service teachers in facilitating student-led IEPs

leads to more successful outcomes during the IEP meeting. There are additional efforts which support a similar systematic approach.

At the school level, several educational professionals created an inquiry group to support special education teachers in facilitating student led IEPs. They found that a monthly meeting of professionals who were willing to share and implement ideas enabled better outcomes for creating student-led IEPs. Teachers came to the inquiry group with questions and offered advice, and ultimately created a culture of support and problem-solving that helped the teachers to support students with student-led IEPs (Eisenman et al., 2005). Limitations of this study include the inconsistency of teacher participation throughout the school year, where attendance at the monthly meetings was sporadic and inconsistent, as well as a lack of evidence for student success. The researchers noted student success informally through conversations among teacher participants and the criteria ranged from a being able to explain an IEP goal to an increase in participation at their IEP meeting. Still, inquiry groups could serve as a viable method for teachers to advance their skills in supporting student-led IEP meetings but use of a specific implementation strategy could be just as much, if not more impactful.

Implementation Strategies

In order to successfully facilitate student-led IEP meetings, educators must have a clear process. Mason et al. (2004) outline steps to support students in leading their own IEP meetings. Using prior research data that one of the authors collected, the researchers outline three phases. Each phase increases the students' role in their IEP meetings from describing their interests and strengths, to explaining their disability, to leading the entire IEP meeting. The authors also outlined six sessions that would support students in being able to lead their own IEP meetings. These sessions include instruction in IDEA and composition of an IEP, transition considerations, parent/teacher feedback for student, and student practice of the actual IEP meeting. When done with fidelity, these sessions ultimately support student-led IEP meetings.

Further work is needed to conclude the success of this curriculum, or a similar curriculum in supporting student-led IEPs.

Although challenges in implementation exist, such as time constraints, schedule barriers, and lack of knowledge of student-led IEPs, there are also remedies. Hawbaker (2007) offers suggestions to barriers of implementation. There are not financial, time, or personal perspectives that teachers cannot overcome to ensure success in student-led IEP meetings. Actionable steps to be successful in implementing student-led IEPs within one school year as well as a template that students can utilize for leading their IEP meetings also alleviate obstacles. Using templates and working with students will produce stronger student outcomes in leading their own IEPs and therefore supporting their self-determination and future success in life. There are many methods to ensure students are able to meaningfully lead their IEP meetings. Clearly, a systematic approach is best to ensure fidelity and success in student-led IEPs.

Cavendish et al. (2016) also examined methods for supporting student-centered and directed IEPs as well as increasing family involvement. Meetings and discussion with the student and family previous to and after IEP meetings support meaningful involvement and conversation. The meeting participants must engage in specific discussion in each of the conversations about how best to encourage student and family participation, which therefore provides more meaningful, student-centered outcomes through the IEP meeting process. By using pre-written outlines and organized materials for discussion, IEP meetings can be more student-led.

Similar to the above mentioned researchers, Davis & Cumming (2019) delineate a step-by-step format for implementing student-led IEPs for students with EBD, which could certainly serve other students as well. The researchers outline five phases of supporting students in a student led IEP which go further than previous research and also suggests that students personally invite the team members as well as develop a script for the meeting. Although the

researchers determined specific steps for supporting students with EBD specifically, they did not produce data or concrete evidence that these practices would support students in leading their own IEP meeting. Through other research, one can conclude that if these practices were implemented, many students would experience success in leading their IEP meetings, but at a ratio and rate that is unknown based on solely their research. Again, we see that pre-written outlines and preparation are key in supporting student-led IEPs.

To further understanding of successes of student-led IEP meetings, teachers used curriculum from McGahee et al. (2001) *Student-led IEPs: A Guide for Student Involvement*. Teachers of 43 culturally-diverse, high-school-age students all from the same high school collected qualitative data through observation and quantitative data through interviews which led researchers to conclude that student participants were better able to explain their disability, components of their IEP, and their rights as a student with disabilities. The majority of students in the study participated in their IEP meetings, and teachers reported an increase in self-advocacy skills and confidence (Mason et al., 2002). It is clear that through intentional planning and organization, students are more involved in their own education and transition, and therefore life after high school through student-led IEP meetings.

To highlight a specific example of multiple students' successes in student-led planning, Johnson et al. (2013) made changes to support students in becoming more independent at the Texas School for the Deaf. Steps that were taken were incorporating time into each day to teach transition skills and work with teachers in content areas in which students need the most support. Students created their own presentations that outlined their interests, skills, areas of needed support, and accommodations. The article also outlined a teacher, student, and parent perspective who all reported that the advisory time and subsequent self-directed IEP meetings gave students more voice and influence on their academic goals and transition for the future. The researcher's findings have shortcomings in that this is only a depiction where an entire school becomes dedicated to student-led IEPs, whereas an individual teacher or department

may experience more barriers. Even so, because of the researcher's work, one can reasonably understand that with a few curriculum modifications or time built in, students have the opportunity to more successfully lead their IEPs.

Additionally, Benitez et. al. (2005) conducted a study at an alternative high school for students identified as having emotional and behavioral disorders. The researchers met with five students over four and a half weeks to support the students in setting and following through on personal goals. The researchers indicated that students made progress towards attaining their goals because of the students' ability to make their own choices and experience autonomy. When students were able to make their own decisions and act independently, they were more likely to be successful, which is why student-led IEPs are crucial for students in special education.

More personal examples exist of the success of incorporating student-led IEPs into a students' special education experience. Nolan-Spohn (2016) explains her experience with creating student-centered IEPs and supporting students to independently self-advocate. Nolan-Spohn, who is also the teacher, utilized a student-centered approach at a middle school in Chicago. She found that students were better able to explain and advocate for their accommodations and also mentioned the implications for younger students to be more involved with the IEP process to better support independence and self-advocacy. Nolan-Spohn's study lacks both quantitative and qualitative information sufficient to determine the positive outcomes of student-led IEPs. As with other research, it is difficult to determine the concrete success of student-led IEPs as little contemporary data exists. Still, this shows that student-centered IEPs may empower students to demonstrate self-determination behaviors.

The above researchers indicate the importance of autonomy and ability in students' success after high school. Several of the above researchers also found that a systematic approach to student-led IEPs support students in increasing self-determination behaviors. There are specific outlines, templates, and curricula to support the success of self-determination

behaviors during IEP meetings. Martin and Marshall (1995) best outline a pre-packaged curriculum as well its positive impact on students. The research team's study on this nine-lesson curriculum included 130 middle and high school age students, half of which engaged in lessons with a teacher and half as the control. Teachers implemented the lessons in a wide variety of ways (two to three days per week, nine days consecutively, all at once after school). The researchers collected results based on surveys and interviews as well as time-sampling data collected during IEP meetings. Findings included students beginning and speaking more during their IEP meetings, students having a more positive outlook towards their IEP meetings, and students better able to describe their strengths and needs (Martin et al., 2006). It is clear that when teachers use these lessons, students are better able to lead their own IEP meetings. Another important finding from this study is that the lessons, although structured, do not have to be taught in a specific timeframe style; meaning teachers are able to fit in the lessons where it makes sense for both the school day and specific student. This ensures ease of access for students across various programming styles, and eliminates one potential barrier to implementation.

Administrators, teachers, families, and students need more evidence-based research to support the outcomes of student-led IEPs. Although there are some studies conducted throughout the United States, a lack of replication still exists. Furthermore, Martin et. al. (2006) seems to have the most extensive research to support the success of student-led IEPs and it is worth determining if those successes can be modeled through additional field research. Therefore, it is necessary to determine if participation in a nine-session curriculum of student-led IEP training among high school students in a rural Midwest population will lead to demonstration of self-determination behaviors during their IEP meetings.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Researchers must collect a substantial body of evidence to identify best practices in supporting students with self-determination skills. Martin et. al. (2006) proposed a nine-session curriculum, *ChoiceMaker*, to advance self-determination behaviors during IEP meetings. It is necessary to build upon the work that Martin and his colleagues have already conducted. I have determined in one instance whether six high school students in a rural setting who were identified with a disability and have an IEP exhibited increased self-determination behaviors during their IEP meetings given participation in nine sessions focused on student-led IEP instruction. Specifically, I used a quasi-experimental study with six students to determine the impact of a nine-session curriculum on self-determination behaviors. Another teacher or I tallied the number of times that a student spoke during the IEP meeting at 60 second intervals, counting only statements related to IEP development and self-advocacy. I analyzed the findings to conclude whether there was substantial evidence that students who received the lessons displayed more self-determination behaviors.

Setting and Participants

According to the 2018-2019 school report card, the race/ethnicity distribution at the high school was approximately 89% White, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 2% two or more races, 1% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and Black or African American. The high school had approximately 12% of high school students identified with a disability, 26% economically disadvantaged, and 2% English language learners. The classroom where students received instruction was a special education resource room which was used for various purposes throughout the day and singularly used for teaching the curriculum during that time.

Participants for the research consisted of six freshman students who were identified with a disability, learning or emotional/behavioral, at a rural school in a North-Central State. Each student had been enrolled in the same district for at least five years and was in their first year at the high school.

Three of the students had engaged in the *ChoiceMaker*-Self Directed IEP curriculum and served as the treatment group. Three had not been involved in the curriculum and served as the control group with no explicit instruction in self-determination skills. The students who were involved in the curriculum were chosen because it supported their IEP goals of self-advocacy as well as having had the same case manager. The other students did not have the same IEP goals and all shared a different case manager. The treatment group needed instruction in self-advocacy skills per their IEP goals because they were typically students who did not contribute to their previous IEP meetings, had expressed confusion about the IEP process, and had thoughts about their own learning and education but had not yet successfully displayed those sentiments. The district had approved the use of *ChoiceMaker* Self-Directed IEP curriculum.

Students involved in the curriculum were not obligated to approve the use of their data in the study. I ensured students and guardians understood this by explaining this verbally as well as issuing and collecting the IRB Parent Consent Form and the IRB Assent for Minors (see Appendices B-D). The students and parents were aware that they were volunteering for the study and could choose to have their information withdrawn at any time prior to the data being analyzed and integrated in the report.

Procedures

Martin and Marshall's (1995) *ChoiceMaker* curriculum provided students with disabilities the opportunity to have more autonomy in their education. The *ChoiceMaker* curriculum was organized into three sections, each delineated further into nine specific lesson plans and topics. The first section was focused on goal setting, which included background knowledge about the IEP process and history, an interest inventory, a skills and limitations section, and finally goal creation. The second section was focused on supporting students to express their goals during the IEP meeting. The third section was meant to support students in creating a plan, monitoring their own progress, and evaluating and altering goals if necessary. Lessons were held individually over a five-week period and took place during the students' scheduled study hall. I

taught two forty-five minute lessons per week with a total of nine sessions leading up to the students' IEP meetings.

Data Collection and Analysis

During each of the six students' IEP meetings, another special education teacher or I obtained time-sampling data every sixty seconds, indicating in a tally chart whether the student was speaking or not (see Appendix A). We counted only statements related to IEP development and self-advocacy. The use of time-sampling data produced formal observations which we then used to quantify the number of times students displayed the target behavior: speaking on-topic. This allowed for quantifying and analyzing the data more efficiently, as opposed to informal data collection which could be used in a qualitative study (Boudah, 2011).

I then calculated the mean score of both the control and treatment group. Because of the small sample size, it would have been inappropriate to use a t-test for analysis. The mean was appropriate given the small sample size and that the mean was more efficient to interpret than considering each individual participant, with each individual student in both control and treatment groups having spoken near the same number of times. This fact was also the reason that analyzing the median and range was unnecessary (Borg et al., 1989). I used the students' mean data to determine if the nine-session curriculum impacted the amount of student participation during the IEP meeting which would therefore indicate an increase in self-determination behaviors.

Chapter 4: Results

Self-determination is necessary for all students, and particularly for students who are identified with disabilities. It is important to understand and be able to utilize the most impactful strategies and curriculum to ensure that students graduate with the skills needed to make their own decisions and have the autonomy needed to lead successful lives. Students with IEPs need more experience and skill in self-advocacy and self-determination (Wagner, 2016). Schools need to implement curriculum designed to teach these skills. Through this research, I sought to identify whether teaching Martin and Marshall's (1995) ChoiceMaker curriculum would lead to an increase in self-determination behavior during high school students' IEP meetings.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a specific curriculum would increase high school special education students' self-determination behaviors during their IEP meeting. This study utilized Martin and Marshall's (1995) ChoiceMaker curriculum. I conducted this research in a rural school in a North Central State. Each student in the study was enrolled in the same district for at least five years and was in their first year at the high school. There were six total participants, all of whom have been identified with a disability. Three of the students served as the treatment group by engaging in the ChoiceMaker-Self Directed IEP curriculum. The control group also consisted of three students, who had not been involved in the curriculum and had no explicit instruction in self-determination skills. The students who were involved in the curriculum were chosen because it supported their IEP goals of self-advocacy as well as having had the same case manager. The students in the control group did not have the same IEP goals and all shared a different case manager. I determined whether the use of the ChoiceMaker curriculum increased students' self-determination behaviors during their IEP meeting by tallying and analyzing the amount of times they spoke at sixty second intervals throughout each meeting. More information about research methods, data collection, and data analysis is located in Chapter 3.

Data findings

The six IEP meetings were held in the same conference room within the high school. Each meeting consisted of between six to eight total participants. The amount of time per IEP meeting ranged from 50 to 75 minutes. The approximate average IEP meeting duration for the control group was 65 minutes, while the duration for the treatment group was roughly 70 minutes.

After the IEP meetings took place for both treatment and control groups of students, I organized the data in order to analyze the results. Participants who received the ChoiceMaker lessons spoke on the topics of IEP development and self-advocacy for totals of fifteen, ten, and six times. Participants in the control group spoke on the same topics four, three, and two times. The total number of times students in the control group spoke was 9 while the treatment group spoke a total of 31 times. The mean of the control group was 3 as compared with 10.33 for the treatment group. The mean of students who spoke on-topic during their IEP meeting was over three times greater for the intervention group in comparison to the control group. This data is presented in Table 1. The treatment group needed instruction in self-advocacy skills per their IEP goals because they were typically students who did not contribute to their previous IEP meetings, had expressed confusion about the IEP process, and had thoughts about their own learning and education but had not yet successfully displayed those sentiments.

Table 1*60-s Momentary Time Sampling Results*

Baseline Characteristics	Control	Intervention
Student 1	4	-
Student 2	3	-
Student 3	2	-
Student 4	-	15
Student 5	-	10
Student 6	-	6
Total	9	31
Mean	3	10.33

Validity and Reliability

Considering the results of both control and treatment groups, if there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the target behavior, as well as incorporating each student's total, I would have concluded that students who were engaged in the curriculum did better than students who did not participate in the curriculum. Although I was not able to assess the reliability using a pre-test and post-test, there should be significant differences in the means of the control group versus the treatment group. Had there been more participants, a t-test would have provided the most accurate data, but given the number of participants that would be an unrealistic form of measurement. However, there is value in conducting research by using a

small sample size, as it allowed for a more efficient way to collect and interpret findings (Borg et al., 1989).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Students with IEPs need skills in self-advocacy and self-determination, yet many lack those skills as they exit high school (Wagner, 2016). In order to support students in displaying self-determination behaviors, researchers must gather an extensive body of evidence. It is helpful to build upon the work that Martin and his colleagues conducted concerning their nine-session curriculum, *ChoiceMaker* (Martin et. al.,2006).

Using a quasi-experimental study with six students, I determined the impact of a nine-session curriculum on self-determination behaviors. Another teacher or I tallied the number of times that a student spoke during the IEP meeting at 60 second intervals, counting only statements related to IEP development and self-advocacy. After analyzing the findings, I concluded there was substantial evidence that students who received the lessons displayed more self-determined behaviors.

Data Analysis

Students who participated in the nine-week self-determination curriculum displayed a mean participation of 10.33 times during their IEP meeting while students who did not participate in the curriculum demonstrated a mean participation of only three times. The treatment group that participated in the curriculum, on average, participated over three times as much as the control group, who did not participate. The treatment group clearly displayed more instances of self-determination behaviors when compared with the control group. This indicates that the use of Martin and Marshall's (1995) *ChoiceMaker* curriculum increased the number of times students exhibited self-determination behaviors during their IEP meetings. This promotes self-determination skills necessary for life after high school Martin et al., 2006).

Using Martin and Marshall's (1995) *ChoiceMaker* curriculum positively impacted students' ability to demonstrate self-determined behaviors during their IEP meetings. This demonstrates Martin and his colleagues' findings from their study in which they determined that the use of the *ChoiceMaker* curriculum would increase the amount of times students exhibited

self-determination behaviors during their IEP meeting (Martin et. al.,2006). Because students have increased self-determination skills during their IEP meeting, they will be better able to advocate for themselves after high school. In this way, students will be better prepared for success after they exit high school (Wagner, 2016).

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths of the choice of research participants include ensuring that all participants were affected by the same outside variables such as community events, weekends, holidays, and time of year which lessens, but does not eliminate, the possibility that their performance was unbalanced due to outside events. Additionally, all students had the same instructor of curriculum (me) and were instructed in the same manner on the same days. The use of the small sample size makes it easier to more efficiently gather and interpret data (Borg et al., 1989). Students were also instructed during their study hall and therefore did not need to take additional time outside of school or during their classes, which reduced the possibility of students feeling stressed or overburdened during instruction, although some students may have felt that they needed the time during study hall to complete schoolwork.

Limitations of the research methods may be that I used a small convenience sample size. I had specifically chosen the students that I instructed because they were on my case load while the students in the control group were not. According to Keppel and Wickens (2004), using a convenience sample means there could be similarities specific to members of the control group and/or the treatment group of subjects. This means the outcome of the experiment may have been due to those similarities rather than singularly the treatment (Keppel & Wickens, 2004).

Additionally, because of the timeframe of this research, there was no baseline data to analyze, so this was a post-test only research design. If I had been able to use a pre-assessment to determine the performance of the two groups as baseline data, it would have helped ensure the validity of the scores from the post-test. This would help inform whether the

students of each group displayed a similar amount of self-determination behaviors prior to the intervention, or if the students were already wide-ranging in the amount of times displaying those behaviors. The lack of a pre-test does somewhat compromise the internal validity of the findings (Boudah, 2011).

Another limitation was that time-sampling data may have helped me indicate more speaking but did not indicate a clear understanding of the dialogue's content (Creswell, 2014). This means a student may have spoken less but more intently, while another student spoke more but was not as focused. Still, I was able to find an indication of active participation in the students' IEP meeting.

Although there was a small variance in the number of minutes that took place during IEP meetings of the treatment and control groups, the difference did not seem to impact the amount of times students shared, but rather shifted the amount of times actively engaged on the topic of self-determination.

Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations include that not all students in special education received individualized instruction in self-determination skills. If findings determined the curriculum is beneficial, then some students were excluded from a program that would have helped increase their ability to display self-determination behaviors. This is because of the differences in case managers and time constraints when the instruction was taking place. Another ethical concern may be that students may find their data to be personal and may not want me to utilize their data for this project, but may not express this.

Implications for Practitioners and Researchers

The ability to improve students' self-determination skills enables many members of the education system to ensure students graduate with the appropriate self-advocacy skills needed to be successful (Wagner, 2016). Teachers and case managers can further build upon this study by collecting pre-assessment data during students' IEP meetings, implementing the

ChoiceMaker curriculum, and then collecting post-assessment data during the next IEP meeting. Administrators, teachers, and case managers who are involved in a students' transition can utilize this knowledge to better support students in special education.

Administrators can integrate the use of *ChoiceMaker* into the curriculum used by special education teachers and/or case managers. Teachers and case managers can incorporate *ChoiceMaker* during a structured study hall or another specified time that is set aside to support students' self-advocacy or transition goals. By utilizing this curriculum, they can support students to be better self-advocates and display behaviors that will help them well after they have completed general education.

More studies must be conducted for different sub-groups of students in special education. Although researchers have conducted studies on a large scale with many students and several schools, little research has been completed for students with intellectual disabilities, for example (Martin et al., 2006). Additionally, qualitative research on the subject would allow researchers to elaborate with more descriptive conclusions about the effects of the specific curriculum on different sub-groups of the special education population. Researchers should still consider using a small sample size, as it can improve the quality of research as opposed to the sample quantity (Borg et al., 1989).

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Appendix A: Data Collection Sheet

Tally at each given interval

Appendix B: IRB Parent Consent with Participation in Curriculum

Parental Consent Form for parents whose children did not undergo curriculum:

Self-Determination Behaviors after Instruction in ChoiceMaker Curriculum

Parental Consent for your Child to Participate in Research

Purpose of the research: Jennifer Halicki, from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is conducting a research project on analyzing data to determine if the use of a specific self-advocacy curriculum will increase self-determination behaviors during a students' IEP meeting. By conducting this research, we hope to learn the impact of the self-advocacy curriculum *ChoiceMaker* and whether the district will continue its use. Your child is being invited to participate in this research because they have not participated in the curriculum and there is data on how often they spoke during the IEP meeting. This data would be compared with students who did participate in the curriculum and with how often they spoke that their IEP meeting. This consent form contains important information about this project and what to expect if you decide to provide permission for your child to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision.

Procedures: Your child's participation will involve my use of their data about whether they participated in the curriculum as well as a tally of how many times they spoke during their IEP meeting at 30 second intervals.

Time Involvement: Your child's participation will take no time at all away from them.

Risks & Benefits: The risks associated with this study are that I would need approximately 5-15 minutes to discuss the study with your child and ask them for permission to use their data as well. Another risk is that they may feel pressure to answer yes, because I am a teacher. The benefits to participation include that Brillion will continue to utilize the curriculum and therefore all special education students would benefit. They would benefit either by using the curriculum if findings show success, or by utilizing a different curriculum if findings show ineffectiveness.

My research will also give me practice conducting a research study and will lead to the completion of my Master's degree. The study is also a part of my personal professional development in my position, so that will help me fulfill the district requirement. It will also set the stage for more discussion about self-determination and how to support students with special education, and teachers will be more willing to delve into academic journals and literature to make informed decisions. The findings from this project will provide information on the effects a specific curriculum added to the body of knowledge about students in special education and self-determination behaviors. In order for individuals to be successful after high school, self-determination skills are essential, and therefore teachers

must be able to make informed decisions on how best to teach those skills. This study will help further answer that question.

Privacy & Confidentiality of your Information: The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals. Your child's individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. The only information collected will be a tally without any identifying information. Data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the special education classroom and will be destroyed after three years.

Private identifiable information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Payment: You will receive no compensation for agreement of participation.

Right to Withdraw from the Research: Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose whether or not your child will participate. If you decide that you do not want your child to participate in this study, your choice will have no effect on your child's academic status or class grade(s). Once the data has begun to be analyzed it will be completely anonymous and therefore cannot be withdrawn from the research. Please email Jennifer Halicki.

Questions about Research Study:

The person in charge of this study Stacey Skoning of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Department of Special and Early Childhood Education. If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study please use the following contact information: Jennifer Halicki.

Independent Contact for Reporting Concerns about Research:

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns about your child's rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Institutional Review Board Office (IRB).

Consent:

Participation in this research is voluntary. Your signature below indicates that you have read this form and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature: I agree to allow my child to participate in this research.

Print Name of Child

Print Name of Parent/Legal Guardia

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Date

Appendix C: IRB Parent Consent without Participation in Curriculum

Self-Determination Behaviors after Instruction in ChoiceMaker Curriculum

Parental Consent for your Child to Participate in Research

Purpose of the research: Jennifer Halicki from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is conducting a research project on analyzing data to determine if the use of a specific self-advocacy curriculum will increase self-determination behaviors during a students' IEP meeting. By conducting this research, we hope to learn the impact of the self-advocacy curriculum *ChoiceMaker* and whether the district will continue its use. Your child is being invited to participate in this research because they have participated in the curriculum and there is data on how often your child spoke during their IEP meeting. This consent form contains important information about this project and what to expect if you decide to provide permission for your child to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision.

Procedures: Your child's participation will involve my use of their data about whether they participated in the curriculum as well as a tally of how many times they spoke during their IEP meeting at 30 second intervals.

Time Involvement: Your child's participation will take no time at all away from them.

Risks & Benefits: The risks associated with this study are that I would need approximately 5-15 minutes to discuss the study with your child and ask them for permission to use their data as well. Another risk is that they may feel pressure to answer yes, because I am a teacher. The benefits to participation include that Brillion will continue to utilize the curriculum and therefore all special education students would benefit. They would benefit either by using the curriculum if findings show success, or by utilizing a different curriculum if findings show ineffectiveness.

My research will also give me practice conducting a research study and will lead to the completion of my Master's degree. The study is also a part of my personal professional development in my position, so that will help me fulfill the district requirement. It will also set the stage for more discussion about self-determination and how to support students with special education, and teachers will be more willing to delve into academic journals and literature to make informed decisions. The findings from this project will provide information on the effects a specific curriculum added to the body of knowledge about students in special education and self-determination behaviors. In order for individuals to be successful after high school, self-determination skills are essential, and therefore teachers must be able to make informed decisions on how best to teach those skills. This study will help further answer that question.

Privacy & Confidentiality of your Information: The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals. Your child's individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. The only information collected will be a tally without any identifying information. Data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the special education classroom and will be destroyed after three years.

Private identifiable information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Payment: You will receive no compensation for agreement of participation.

Right to Withdraw from the Research: Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose whether or not your child will participate. If you decide that you do not want your child to participate in this study, your choice will have no effect on your child's academic status or class grade(s). Once the data has begun to be analyzed it will be completely anonymous and therefore cannot be withdrawn from the research. Please email Jennifer Halicki.

Questions about Research Study:

The person in charge of this study Stacey Skoning of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Department of Special and Early Childhood Education. If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study please use the following contact information: Jennifer Halicki.

Independent Contact for Reporting Concerns about Research:

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns about your child's rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Institutional Review Board Office (IRB).

Consent:

Participation in this research is voluntary. Your signature below indicates that you have read this form and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature: I agree to allow my child to participate in this research.

Print Name of Child

Print Name of Parent/Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Date

Appendix D: IRB Student Consent Form

Self-Determination Behaviors after Instruction in ChoiceMaker Curriculum Child Assent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to join a research study by Jennifer Halicki, from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. This project is to see if the use of a curriculum helped students interact more during their IEPs, which shows self-determination skills.

If you join the project, you will be asked to allow us to use the amount of tallies we collected during your IEP meeting in our data collection. No other identifying factors will be used in the report.

If you join, there may be some risks, you may lose a little bit of time during study hall, about 5-15 minutes for one class period so we can discuss your permission. You may also feel pressure to say yes because I am a teacher (please know that it is completely your choice). There may also be some benefits, which include that Brillion will continue to utilize the curriculum and therefore all special education students would benefit. You would benefit either by using the curriculum if findings show success, or by utilizing a different curriculum if findings show ineffectiveness. My research will also give me practice conducting a research study and will lead to the completion of my Master's degree. The study is also a part of my personal professional development in my position, so that will help me fulfill the district requirement. It will also set the stage for more discussion about self-determination and how to support students with special education, and teachers will be more willing to delve into academic journals and literature to make informed decisions. The findings from this project will provide information on the effects a specific curriculum added to the body of knowledge about students in special education and self-determination behaviors. In order for individuals to be successful after high school, self-determination skills are essential, and therefore teachers must be able to make informed decisions on how best to teach those skills. This study will help further answer that question.

If you do not want to join the project, you can let me know in any way you see fit. You can also decline to sign this paperwork.

Any information about you will be kept secure by the researchers by keeping your information in a locked file cabinet for three years, and then shredding the documents.

If you join the study, you will get no compensation/money.

We will provide information to your parents before you decide to join or not join this study. We will also ask your parents for permission for you to be in this study.

If you have any questions at any time, please call or email Jennifer Halicki.

You do not have to be in this study. If you do choose to be in the study, you can change your mind at any time by contacting the researcher.

Signing this form means you have read this form and all of your questions have been answered. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form.

I agree to join this study.

Name of Child Participant

Signature of Child Participant

Date