

## Interventions/strategies to promote self-determined behaviour in students with Intellectual Disabilities

Any Grade Level	Elementary School	Secondary School
<b>Choice Making Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to choose from a variety of learning activities. For a book report, choices could include preparing an oral presentation, a collage, a computer presentation, or a skit based on a portion of the book.</li> <li>• Encourage students to choose their own materials for a project. For a research report, students could choose Internet articles, magazines, books, or personal interviews as their resource materials.</li> <li>• Let students choose where they take part in an activity. When working on a project, give students the opportunity to work at their desk, on the floor, or in the library.</li> <li>• Teach students to make informed choices and provide students with the necessary information to do so. If students are choosing their schedule for next year, provide them with a description of each course option or have them visit the class.</li> <li>• Encourage students to indicate preference through a variety of methods such as nodding yes or no, touching a symbol, or pointing. Give students the opportunity to point to what they want to eat in the lunch line at school rather than choosing for them.</li> <li>• Choice making should become a daily routine across school settings. Provide choices during recess (four square, basketball, or kickball) or during art (painting or drawing; coloured pencils or markers).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create permanent choice aids, such as pictures of recess activities or songs to sing in music class, to help incorporate choice into everyday activities.</li> <li>• Incorporate choices into activities that are not academically related, such as letting students choose who they want to sit with at lunch or snack time or what they want to eat.</li> <li>• Respect a refusal to participate; it is also a choice. When students refuse to participate or accept a predetermined task, they are communicating their preference. Try to find out what is causing the refusal. An understanding of the reasons for a refusal can allow adults to offer more desirable choices.</li> <li>• Let students choose to do their work individually, in groups, or as a whole class.</li> <li>• Create choices related to time, which can also build on important sequencing skills. Let students choose to do an activity before or after lunch, during recess, during free choice time, or before school or after school.</li> <li>• When appropriate, allow students to choose when to take a break from or end an activity.</li> <li>• When safety is not a concern, allow students to make mistakes and learn from natural consequences.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Students with significant disabilities may need more intentional instruction on reflection and evaluation of choices and how they can lead to negative results. For example, if students choose to linger in the lunch room, they will miss recess time.</li> <li>• If you have two or more activities planned for the day, let your students choose which one to do first.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to your students about a choice they have made: how it affected themselves and others, whether it was a good or bad choice, and if they should make that choice again.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Show students a list of available classes and have them help choose some or all of their own classes for the upcoming semester.</li> <li>• Give students a list of extracurricular clubs based on their interests and have them choose one or more that they would like to join.</li> </ul>

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<b>Decision Making Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use visual aids, role playing, social stories, and short videos to help students think about options and information they would need to gather to make a solid decision.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Start teaching decision making with issues that have few negative consequences, such as having students decide how they would like to work on an assignment (paper and pencil or on the computer). After decision making is mastered at this level, move on to issues that might have a greater impact on the student's life, such as choosing classes, job placements, IEP goals, and extracurricular activities. 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students understand that there are risks involved when they make decisions. For example, if they decide not to listen to their parents, they may lose a special privilege.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Give students practice making decisions, exploring consequences, and explaining their reason for making their decisions. <sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Help students begin thinking about different jobs. Use an activity to help explore possible careers, such as listening to a story about jobs or talking to adults they know about their jobs.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to participate in their IEP meetings or student-led conferences.</li> <li>• Give students practice with decision making by having them pick a career they are interested in. This would involve several decisions. Do they want to work indoors or outdoors, alone or with people, during the day or at night? Answers to these questions will help them decide what job or volunteer activity would be the best match for them.</li> <li>• Have students use their decision-making skills to pick volunteer groups or extracurricular clubs they would like to join.</li> <li>• Have them brainstorm which activities interest them (e.g. cooking, music) or the populations (e.g. children, senior citizens) with whom they would like to work to assist in deciding on a club.</li> <li>• Help students become better informed about their options. For example, if students are interested in taking a certain class, obtain a course description and summary of requirements so the students better understand what will be expected of them if they decide to take that class.</li> <li>• Give students chances to observe and experience options before they make a decision. Let students sit in on courses or meet teachers before choosing their schedule for the next year. Provide several job shadow experiences before a student begins applying for jobs.</li> <li>• Promote students' decision-making skills by teaching them what questions to ask when a problem arises.</li> </ul>

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<b>Problem Solving Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Help students identify an opportunity in which they want to try something new or increase their independence. Include ideas on how the student can respond when a challenge arises. If a student is learning to independently access his/her locker and forgets the key, who has a spare key?</i></li> <li>• <i>Help students assess which strategies may be best to address a challenge. If a student doesn't have a key to his/her locker, kicking the locker may get the student into trouble. Conversely, going to the office to request a key is more appropriate.</i></li> <li>• <i>Help students reflect on the choice they made. Did it lead to the result they wanted? Would other strategies have worked better? What can they do next time?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use a sequence of pictures to teach a problem-solving plan for a specific situation, such as bullying on the playground. Encourage children to draw out the steps of a problem-solving plan or bring in their own pictures to illustrate the plan.<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Read a story about a problem, such as A Day's Work by Eve Bunting, and have children discuss the problem, come up with solutions, and think about outcomes.<sup>5</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Have children brainstorm solutions to a particular problem and design an invention that would help solve it.<sup>5</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Teach children how to use problem-solving skills when someone hurts their feelings or engages in name-calling.<sup>5</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Give students practice using and applying a problem-solving process in class with teacher-generated and student-generated scenarios.<sup>3</sup></i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When encountering a problem, encourage students to reflect on what happened or what they did the last time that same problem occurred. For example, if a peer hurts their feelings, they can think about a strategy they used the last time that someone hurt their feelings. Did they talk to a teacher? What was the outcome? Perhaps the teacher mediated a discussion between the two students.</i></li> <li>• <i>During transitions to a new building (i.e., fifth grade, eighth grade), take students to the new school to begin getting acclimated to a different environment and expectations. Consider opportunities for problem solving, such as learning how to navigate the building.<sup>6</sup> Consider building some extended school year time into the summer to work on learning the new schedule, building layout, and expectations.</i></li> <li>• <i>Practice unique problem-solving scenarios that might come up in the work place, such as completing tasks on time, talking with a coworker, change taking place at work, and budgeting.<sup>1</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Create a "wheel of fortune" with different difficult situations in each section (i.e. bullying on the playground). Have students think about how they could confront and control each problem so that it results in a positive learning experience. This will also help teach students that they are in control of their reactions and the situation.<sup>3</sup></i></li> </ul>

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<b>Goal Setting and Attainment Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When helping students set goals, encourage them to think about the process of achieving their goals rather than just the outcomes. They can write or draw the steps of their process. For example, if students are working toward making enough money for a new pair of shoes, have them estimate how many hours of work it will take to reach that goal.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Help students make manageable goals that they can meet in a certain amount of time, such as a 45-minute class period, a day, or a week.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Empower students to set goals related to their own learning, such as how many pages they will read during a set period of time or how many words they will copy for spelling.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Help students create “road maps” that mark both their short-term and long-term goals. Have students develop and illustrate their maps to personalize it and make goal setting fun.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Teach a simple method for goal setting and attainment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students often can understand an abstract concept like goal setting if it is paired with a visual example, such as a poster, collage, or scrapbook. If a student’s goal is to finish homework on time, help create a collage with pictures representing time, such as an alarm clock, and pictures of homework examples. Encouraging students to add pictures of what it will feel like to have the homework done on time (smiley face) will help increase motivation. Displaying these visuals can reinforce and encourage students.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Make a personal recording chart for the student that lists his/her weekly classroom goals. As the goals are completed, a sticker of the student’s choice may be placed on the sheet, positively reinforcing the student’s behaviour of working to accomplish the goal. At the end of the week, a larger reward may be given if all goals are attained.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to identify activities that will help them work toward meeting their goals, such as applying for apprenticeships and internships, joining a school or community club, going on job shadowing and mentoring days, participating in service-learning projects, and attending open houses and job fairs.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Have students identify a goal for what they want to do after high school, such as getting a specific job. Create a folder with information related to the goal (e.g. job requirements) and a checklist of steps needed to reach the goal (e.g. meet with career counsellor, get a job application, etc). Reward students when steps on the checklist are completed. If there are several students with similar goals, start a club for them to work together on these goals.</li> <li>• Help students formulate goals they would like to include on their next IEP and indicate how they plan to achieve those goals by listing their likes, dislikes, and areas where they need support.</li> </ul>

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<b>Self-Advocacy and Leadership Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teach students the difference between being assertive and being aggressive. Role-play an assertive behaviour like expressing their rights (e.g. refusing an activity or stating an unpopular opinion) and an inappropriate aggressive behaviour (e.g. using physical force). Discuss why being assertive is the better choice.<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Encourage students to practice self-advocacy and leadership skills when real situations arise during the school day. If students are late for class, support them in requesting the necessary pass or permission. If students do not understand an assignment from a teacher, encourage them to find the teacher during lunch or after school to get help or clarification.<sup>9</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Implement a self-advocacy curriculum in the classroom that addresses the components of self-advocacy. Include communication, listening, goal setting, and perspective-taking skills, as well as knowledge of rights and self-awareness. Devote a couple of weeks to discussing each skill with students.<sup>9</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Pair students with a successful older student or young adult with a similar disability who can serve as a mentor and model appropriate self-advocacy and leadership skills. Plan a day where they can meet and have them set up a schedule of dates/times when they can get together. Follow up with both students to ensure that this is a positive experience.<sup>2</sup> Resource: <a href="http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/wrc/pdf/pubs/PPM.pdf">http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/wrc/pdf/pubs/PPM.pdf</a></i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Demonstrate how bullying and excluding certain people can be harmful. Discuss how leaders need to speak up for others, such as those being bullied or excluded. Have students participate in activities and/or listen to a guest speaker to learn more.<sup>3</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Try an activity that allows students to talk about the perceptions they have of themselves and how this might be different from how other people see them. Teach them how giving and receiving compliments is a way to learn more about how you see others and how others see you.<sup>3</sup></i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Role play transition-related situations that would involve using self-advocacy skills, such as setting up a class schedule and advocating for specific general education classes, moving out of the home, meeting with a medical provider, or going on a job interview.<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Encourage students to become involved in extracurricular clubs, organizations, and service-learning projects within and outside school. These activities give students a chance to identify interests and apply self-advocacy and leadership skills they have learned with others working toward a shared goal. Relationships made during these activities can serve as a source of encouragement and support.<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Plan activities for students that focus on teaching them their rights and responsibilities, as well as identifying strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Students can practice self-advocacy through role-playing and talking to their teachers about the accommodations they need. Teachers can model appropriate ways to self-advocate or have older students share personal stories about their self-advocacy experiences.<sup>3, 11</sup></i></li> </ul>

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#### Self-Management & Self-Regulation Skills

- Have students manage their own tasks by creating a notecard or notebook containing goals, target behaviours, or homework assignments that need to be completed. Have them place it on their desks or carry it with them to classes. Each time they accomplish a goal, perform a behaviour, or complete a homework assignment, they can put a sticker on their card or check off the item. Review their progress with them at the end of each day or week.
- Have students use a journal to keep track of their behaviours or other classroom goals. For example, if a goal is to participate more in class, at the end of each day students could draw or write how much they participated in class. It can be semi-structured by containing a rating scale of classroom participation that the student completes each day (i.e., 1=did not participate, 5=always participated).
- Teach students to monitor a range of behaviours, such as when they are getting upset or when they need to take a break. Develop a strategy with them or what to do when these situations occur, such as going to talk with an adult.

- each younger students self-monitoring skills by having them draw "Countoons." "Countoons" are cartoon representations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. This way, even students who cannot read can record their behaviours. For example, if students are trying to improve on-task behaviour, they can draw a cartoon of themselves reading at their desk and tally the times they are performing this behaviour.<sup>12</sup>

- Foster self-management and self-regulation by having each student set goals and monitor their performance on school-related activities. Try using the Self-Monitoring Sheet listed below. Help students practice self-evaluation by considering the character traits they would like to develop based on the traits of people they admire.<sup>3</sup>
- Have students think about the characteristics of someone they would consider to be a good friend. Afterwards, they can evaluate themselves based on those characteristics and develop a plan to work on traits they would like to improve.<sup>3</sup>

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<b>Self-Awareness &amp; Self-Knowledge Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students choose from a list or write down two strengths and one limitation in the areas of physical, academic, emotional, and social performance. Have their parents and teachers do this also. Then compare and discuss the completed answers with students.</li> <li>• Present students with real-life scenarios and have them think about how they would feel in each situation and how another person in the scenario would feel. Talk about how these viewpoints may be similar or different.</li> <li>• Have students make a poster, collage, or scrapbook illustrating their likes, dislikes, and strengths.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Help students become aware of their strengths and limitations by making an illustrated book that displays "Things I Can Do" and "Things I Need To Work On." An older student may do this with a portfolio or journal.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Boost students' confidence by facilitating activities that highlight their positive traits as perceived by themselves and others.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a "My Likes and Dislikes" quiz to identify personal preferences within various categories (i.e. What's your favourite/least favourite food?). Demonstrate how peers may have different likes and dislikes by sharing the quiz results anonymously through a graph, pie chart, or poster.</li> <li>• Make a class quilt that is composed of drawings of each student's positive attributes to display in the classroom.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students realize strengths and limitations by completing a survey or checklist with "I do _____ well" or "I need help on _____."<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Allow students to demonstrate individual strengths and particular interests by providing a menu of options for completing classroom assignments. For example, to demonstrate understanding of a reading assignment, students could write their own poem or journal entry, create a book jacket, work on a skit, or create a collage.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>• Have one-to-one or small-group discussions on learning about one's strengths and limitations and how these relate to important transition issues such as employment, transportation, and living in the community.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>• Incorporate opportunities for students to create life stories, timelines, and self-portraits as part of assignments to help students understand how their interests compare with peers' interests.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Read books or watch movies that discuss different aspects of disabilities to promote students' self-awareness.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Have students write or audio record an autobiography to better understand their disability.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Inspire students with stories about successful people with disabilities or people who have overcome major obstacles.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>

### Footnotes:

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4. Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., Hughes, C., Martin, J. E., Mithaug, D. E., & Palmer, S. B. (2007). *Promoting self-determination in students with developmental disabilities*. New York: Guilford Press.

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7. Barry, L. M., & Messer, J. J. (2003). A practical application of self-management for students diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 5(4), 238-248.
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