

Arkansas Transition Services presents:



Student Engagement in the IEP Meeting
Guidance for Parents/Families of Students with Disabilities

November 12, 2025



This session will be recorded.

*Recording and slides will be emailed to participants.
Please put all questions in the chat box.*

Lunch and Learn for Parents and Families

- *Held quarterly each school year.*
- *Information requested by parents and families via ATS survey – look for a new one in the Spring 2026!*
- *All sessions recorded and housed on our YouTube channel.*
- *Slides will be emailed to the address provided.*
- *Please stay muted until the Question time at the end.*
- *Put any questions in the chat if you don't want to verbally ask.*
- *We will be respectful of time and adhere to not exceeding the one hour timeframe.*



A top-down view of a desk setup. In the top left, a white cup is filled with dark coffee. To its right is a portion of a white keyboard with keys labeled Z, X, C, V, B, N, M, and comma/less-than. Below the coffee are several round, brown cookies with a square grid pattern. Scattered around the bottom and right sides are several colored pencils in various colors like green, yellow, orange, red, blue, and purple. The word "Introduction" is written in a black, hand-drawn, sketchy font in the center of the image.

Introduction

Welcome & Purpose

Participants will have:

- Increased awareness of components of student-led IEP meetings
- Increased understanding of importance of student involvement in meetings
- Increased awareness of how students can be involved in meetings
- Increased awareness of self-determination and resources for SD and student involvement in IEP meetings

Student Engagement - Benefits for Students

- Increased understanding of their IEP
- Increased goal attainment
- Increased academic achievement
- Increased self-determination
- Increased graduation rates
- Increased motivation
- Increased post-secondary education & employment outcomes

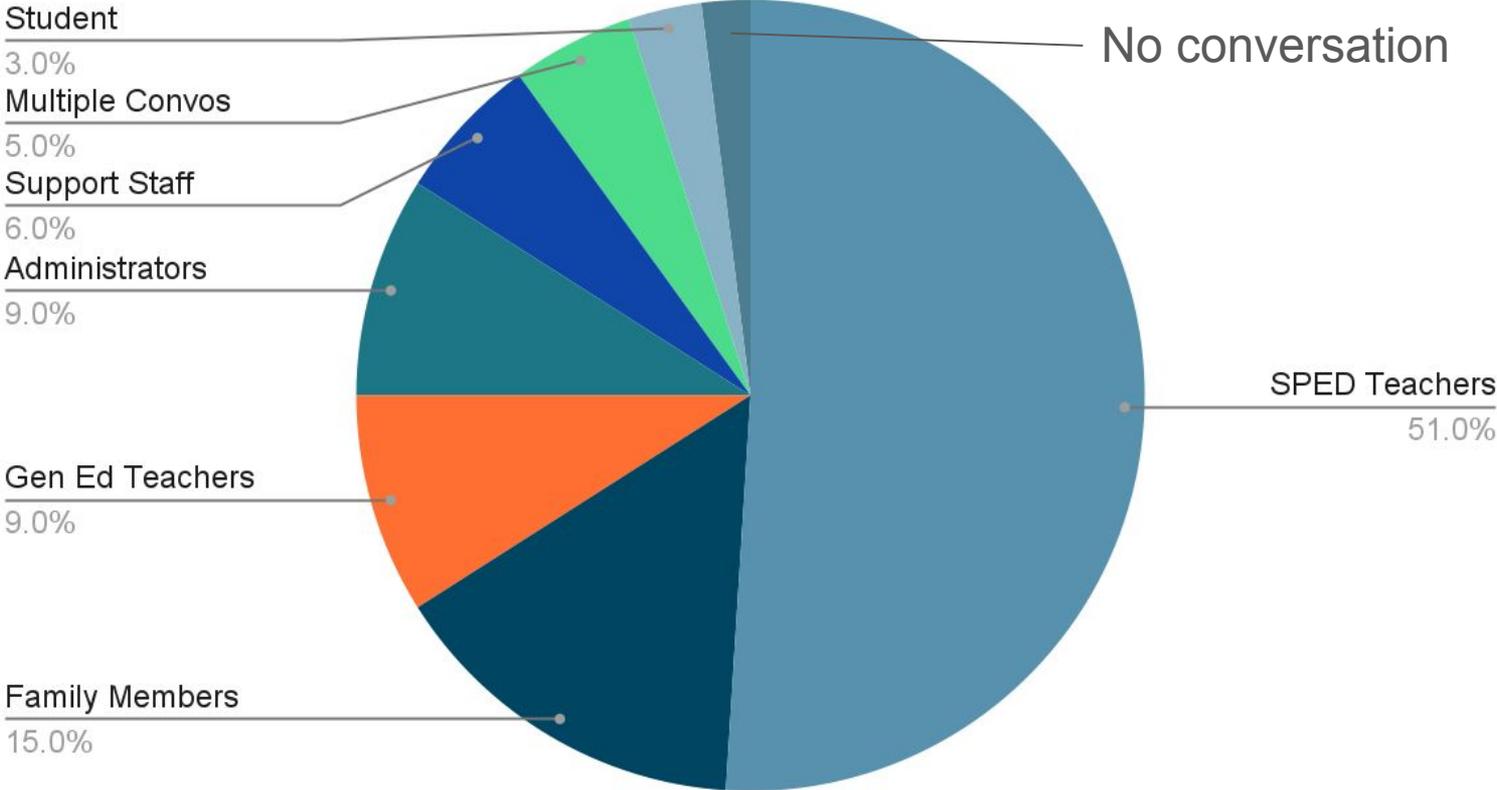


Student Leadership in IEP Meetings - Martin et al., 2005

- 109 meetings attended
- Middle school & high school transition IEP meetings
- 627 IEP team members
 - 155 SPED teachers
 - 106 Gen Ed teachers
 - 125 Family Members
 - 120 Administrators
 - 36 Support Staff
 - 85 Students
 - Ages 12-19
 - Grades 6-12
- Average Length of Meeting - 31.2 minutes
 - 17 - 45 minutes



Who Talks During IEP Meetings?



Student Leadership Steps in IEP Meetings Based on I'm Determined

- Introduce self 3.5%
- Introduce IEP team members 1.2%
- State purpose of the meeting 0.0%
- Review past goals and progress 2.4%
- Ask for feedback 0.0%
- Ask questions if didn't understand 6.0%
- Deal with differences of opinion 5.9%
- State needed support 4.7%
- Express interest 49.4%
- Express skills & limits 20.0%
- Express options & goals 27.1%
- Close meeting by thanking everyone 0.0%

Student Engagement - Benefits for Other IEP Team Members

- Family members gained a better understanding of the reason for the IEP meeting
- Family members have a better understanding of the conversations that take place during the meeting
- Increased participation of other team members, not just the student
- Meetings are more positive and focused on the student's strengths



Quote from Student who led their own IEP...

Leading my own IEP conference was a great experience for me. I had an opportunity to self-advocate and use my self-awareness skills. My parents were really proud of me. At this conference I had a chance to show a power point about me. I shared with my teacher and parents all the subjects I liked, my strengths and my weaknesses, and some of the goals and objectives I completed in my IEP. I also told them my future plans and my postsecondary goals from my Transition Plan.

“The Student -Led Conference is a bridge you cross to self-awareness”

*Paige Kirkpatrick
(Senior CCSD)*

Student Engagement - Barriers for the Student

- Lack of decision-making experience
- Fewer opportunities to discuss their desires
- Discomfort talking to a group of adults
- Lack of understanding of the student's role
- Lack of transition focus during the meeting



Student voices

When I led the Student-Led IEP conference, I felt as if I was driving a car and I took my teachers and parents on a tour of my life in school. At this conference I shared with them some of the things I had done during the year. I felt like a leader. I used my self-advocacy skills. I had an opportunity to talk about my goals in my IEP, my goals I set once I graduate, some of my likes and dislikes, my strengths and weakness and most of all my favorite class, Transition Class. I felt confident about myself. The experience was great. I am a senior and before graduation, I will have another chance to lead my conference and thanks to Mrs. Brandon for teaching me self-determination skills and self-awareness skills.

“The Student –Led Conference is an opportunity to be a leader.”

River Byrne (Senior CCSD)

Self-determination

What is it?

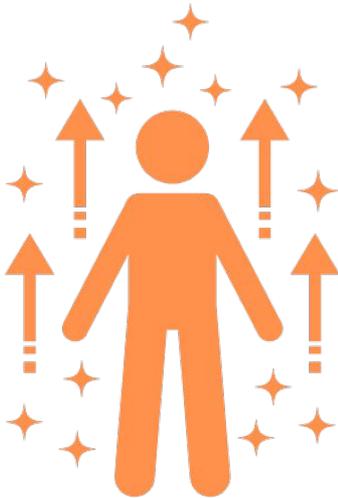
Being self-determined means acting or causing things to happen as you set and work toward goals in your life.

(Shogren & Raley, 2022)



What we know

Self Determination is a predictor of positive post-school outcomes.



Components of self-determination:

- Choicemaking
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Goal-setting & Attainment
- Planning
- Self-management
- Self-awareness
- Self-knowledge



Student Leadership Steps in IEP Meetings Based on I'm Determined

- Introduce self
- Introduce IEP team members
- State purpose of the meeting
- Review past goals and progress
- Ask for feedback
- Ask questions if didn't understand
- Deal with differences of opinion
- State needed support
- **Express interest**
- **Express skills & limits**
- **Express options & goals**
- Close meeting by thanking everyone



Let's Chat!

Please take a minute to type any input you have regarding these questions in the chat box:

What opportunities might you provide for your children/students to express themselves or to practice leadership skills?



Self-determination in Arkansas

Curriculum used/shared: Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction...long ago 2007, Student Directed-IEP, Next Step, Steps, Whose Future is it Anyway?, Me!Curriculum, Student Directed IEP

Model for Transition Planning: Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students(CIRCLES)

Research Studies:

- **Goal Setting Challenge App/SDLMI**
- **CIRCLES**



SDLMI

A teaching model that incorporates students setting goals, create an action plan to reach that goal, and monitor their progress/adjust their plan on reaching the goal.

[Self Determination Inventory: Student Report](#) - a student's reporting of self-determination skills

[Self Determination Inventory: Parent/Teacher Report](#) - measures a teacher's or parent / family member's perception of a young person's self-determination.

3 phases:

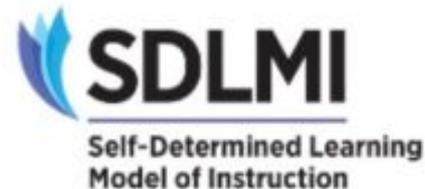
- Phase 1: Set a Goal
- Phase 2: Take Action
- Phase 3: Adjust Goal or Plan

GSC App/SDLMI Study

Purpose: to see if students outcomes improve when given the opportunity to learn and practice self-determination skills.

Arkansas Schools involved in this study - groups use either the SDLMI or the GSC App (SDLMI in a student directed app format), or they only administer assessments.

Now recruiting for Cohort 3



CIRCLES Study

Purpose - to show this model for transition planning improves interagency collaboration and ultimately post-school outcomes.

Students practice self-determination skills throughout the model.



Opportunities to practice self-determination and leadership skills

[Suggestions for Your Participation in the IEP Process](#) - a brochure that serves as a checklist of ways to participate in the IEP meeting

[Use of Graphic Organizers](#) - a great tool to help anyone understand the development of a transition plan!

[How to use the Assessment Results Graphic Organizer](#) - a 3 minute video to show how to use the Graphic Organizer.

How can educators and students work together to use the Graphic Organizer?



How Can Parents Support Student Voices?



Before:

- Ask the IEP team about student participation.
- Talk with your child about strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.
- Practice a “script” at home.

During:

- Allow your child to speak.
- Prompt them to share their views.

After:

- Reflect together—what went well, what to work on next time?
- Find opportunities at home for your child to participate in decisions.

Transition Tips for Parents

Tips for Parents to encourage self-determination skills:

Assign chores for your child at home (helps teach responsibility).

Praise your child for a job well done (whether at school or at home).

Ask your child if they have a particular job interest and why it interests them.

Talk about your job with your child (exposes him/her to real world of work).

Invite friends to talk about their jobs with your child.

Take your child to work with you for a few hours if possible or have a friend take your child to work if possible.

Allow children to make choices and decisions at home (for example: what to have for dinner, what day to do chores, etc.).

Encourage children to set goals at home (for example: to learn to cook a meal).

Ask your child if they understand what their disability is and how it affects them.

Have your child schedule dr. appointments, dentist appointments, hair appointments, etc.

Consider helping your child open a bank account.

Discuss your child's medical history with him/her if appropriate.

Attend IEP meetings at your child's school and encourage them to attend as well.

Parent Resources

[Questions for Families to Ask in Transition IEP Meetings](#) - helps prepare parents to have a more meaningful discussion

[I'm Determined Resources](#) - resources and videos

[ATS Website](#) - a page full of various secondary transition planning resources for parents



Teacher Resources

[ATS Website resources on Self-Determination](#) - under the Self-Determination bar - a variety of tools, curriculum links and resources to help teachers provide more opportunities to learn and practice self-determination.

To participate in Cohort 3 of the GSC App/SDLMI Study - talk to your Transition Consultant



From a Teacher...

During the Student-Led Conferences, students are able to articulate his/her disability, gain strength in self-confidence, self-advocacy skills and self-awareness skills. Students can communicate positively with adults in a leadership role. Some of the benefits in these types of conferences are: the student's eagerness to participate, increased involvement in classroom activities, and students take control and assume responsibility for individual work, progress, and performance. Students are given a voice in making decisions regarding their lives and planning their educational programming. The conference also is a good source of communication between parents, students and teachers. If I had a quote about the Student-Led Conferences I would say: "A Student-Led IEP Conference is a mirror that reflects a student's image of his learning process."

Mrs. Thelma Brandon Transition Teacher (CCSD)

ATS Opportunities to practice SD and Leadership Skills...

Film Camp - a week-long camp filled with opportunities for students to share their voice and express themselves and lead their teammates.

- Team leads who pitched the film proposal to Joey Travolta
- Giving testimonials (link)
- Interviews with Joey ([problem solving, choicemaking, goal setting](#))
- Decision-making - getting out of their comfort zones (speaking to group, singing)
- Planning - writing the script, casting, choosing wardrobe, settings, etc.
- Self-management - staying in hotel, taking meds at camp, etc.
- Self-awareness - using their strengths (art, drawing, voice, makeup, etc.)
- Self-knowledge - knowledge of their preferences (behind the scenes/in front of camera)



Opportunities for Students

- To be on a college campus
- To have work experiences
- To work on a team with expert mentors
- To make new friends
- To learn about some of their strengths
- To try new things - interviews behind camera
- To pitch a film idea
- To advocate for themselves



All Day Learning

- Film terminology
- Interview skills
- Writing
- Taking direction
- Evaluation
- Learning to have fun
- Social
- Hygiene
- Communication
- Problem solving



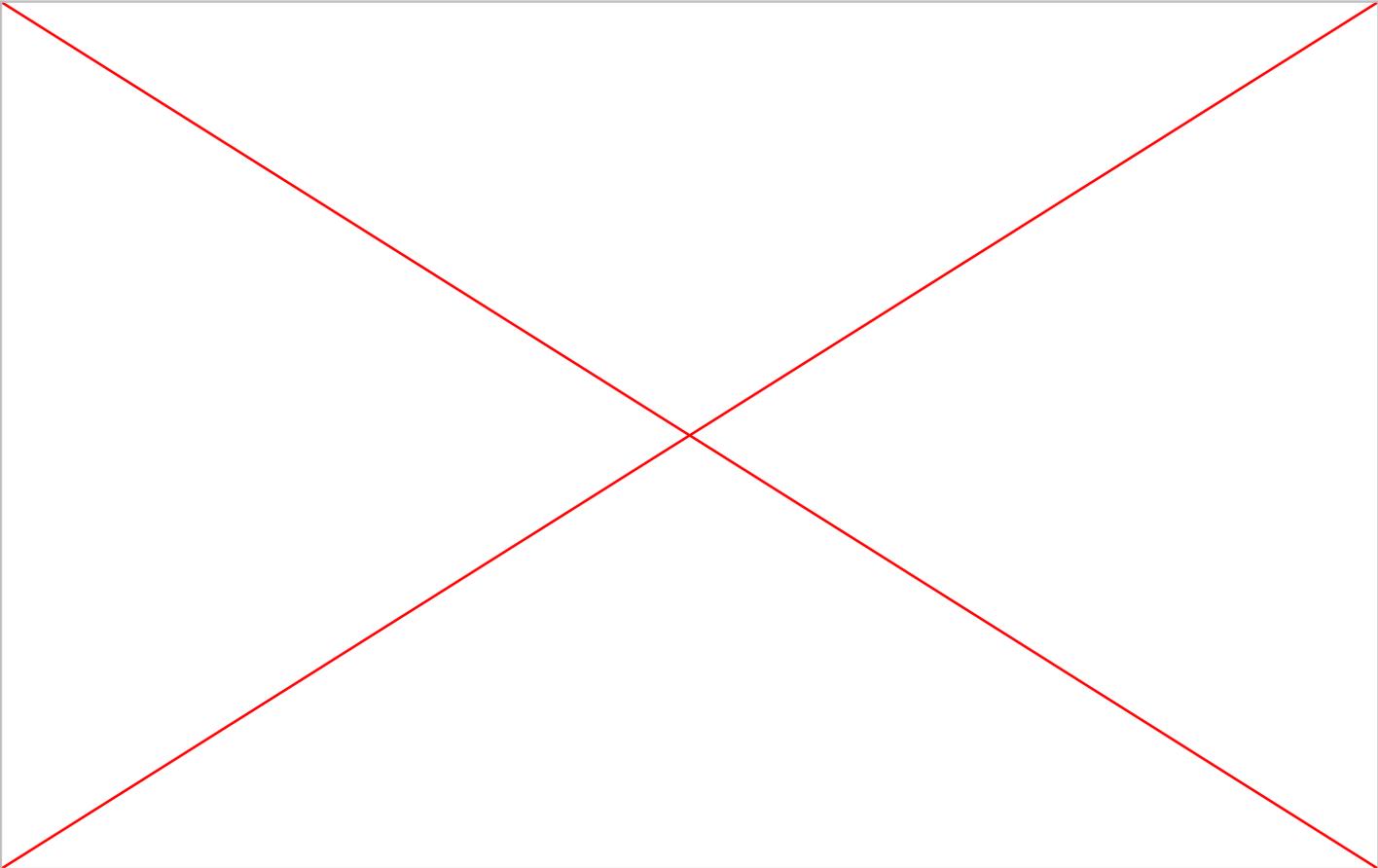
Opportunities to practice SD and Leadership Skills...

College Bound

- Choice Making - recreational activities, career vision boarding
- Decision-making - Circles of Support
- Problem-solving - Human machines activity
- Goal-setting & Attainment - career goal setting
- Planning - bringing supplies, rec activities, taking notes in sessions
- Self-management - taking meds, managing hygiene/schedule
- Self-awareness - Self-determination Inventory
- Self-knowledge - acknowledgement of supports needed at DCI
knowledge of accommodations
- Former campers return as Team Leaders!



College Bound Camper



College Bound Team Leaders

- Current college students using disability supports
- Receive training for their role
- On campus for the duration of CBA
- Serve as amazing mentors for students/Team Leader Panel
- Love to have fun and make students feel at ease
- Involved in all sessions and recreation and leisure activities



ATS Opportunities to practice SD and Leadership Skills...

CTE camp(Currently available in Benton and Bentonville) - Creating circles of support, career maps, making decisions about likes and dislikes of activities,

CIRCLES - Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students - opportunities to create powerpoints on their preferences, interests, strengths; advocate for support needs; share their voices/lead meetings; etc.

SDLMI/GSC App - all the opportunities with lessons on each component of self-determination.



Other opportunities to practice SD and Leadership Skills...

Work-based learning programs - choosing job interests, problem solving when they struggle with a task, setting goals for future employment, self managing pay they receive, planning how to spend money, etc.



What opportunities can you think of for SD/Leadership?

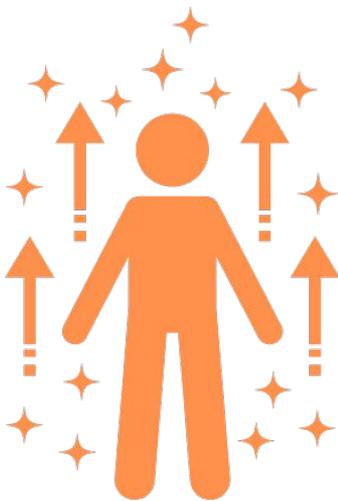
Reflect on what we have shared...

Is there something you could try in your own classroom or program that could give this important opportunity to students?



Regardless of your role...

What is one simple thing you can do to improve student participation in iep meetings, class participation, transition planning, or to practice leadership skills?



Arkansas Transition Services

- Spend some time on our website to learn about:
 - Tools to help you prepare and help support your child.
 - Tools to help your child as they transition to post-school options.
 - Camps that promote self-advocacy, leadership, and growth as they work to reach post-school goals.



ATS Website

www.arkansastransition.com



Upcoming Family/Parent Lunch & Learn Sessions

- ATS Website Resources: **January 28**
- Agency Services and Programs: **March 18**

Mark your calendars...registration will be emailed.



What did we miss?

<https://forms.gle/Lt2ZbCZED8B4o8by6>

