

# Self-Determination in the Classroom



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## Background

Self-determination is "acting based on one's own mind or free will, without external compulsion" (Wehmeyer et al., 2017). Teaching self-determination skills to all students is important because self-determined individuals report better post-school outcomes (White et al., 2018). Unfortunately, students with disabilities, including students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), have lower self-determination skills than students without disabilities and are given less opportunities to learn and practice these skills (Shogren et al., 2018). With this in mind, we created a training for educators to learn how to improve self-determination skills in students with ASD.

## Method

1. We met with the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) and the Delaware Department of Education to discuss state training needs and decided on the topic of self-determination
2. We conducted a literature review to learn more about the self-determination needs of students with ASD, as well as self-determination assessments and interventions
3. We created a PowerPoint professional development training for educators
4. We met with the DNEA several times to receive feedback on the training, and then gathered feedback on the final training from school personnel

## Findings

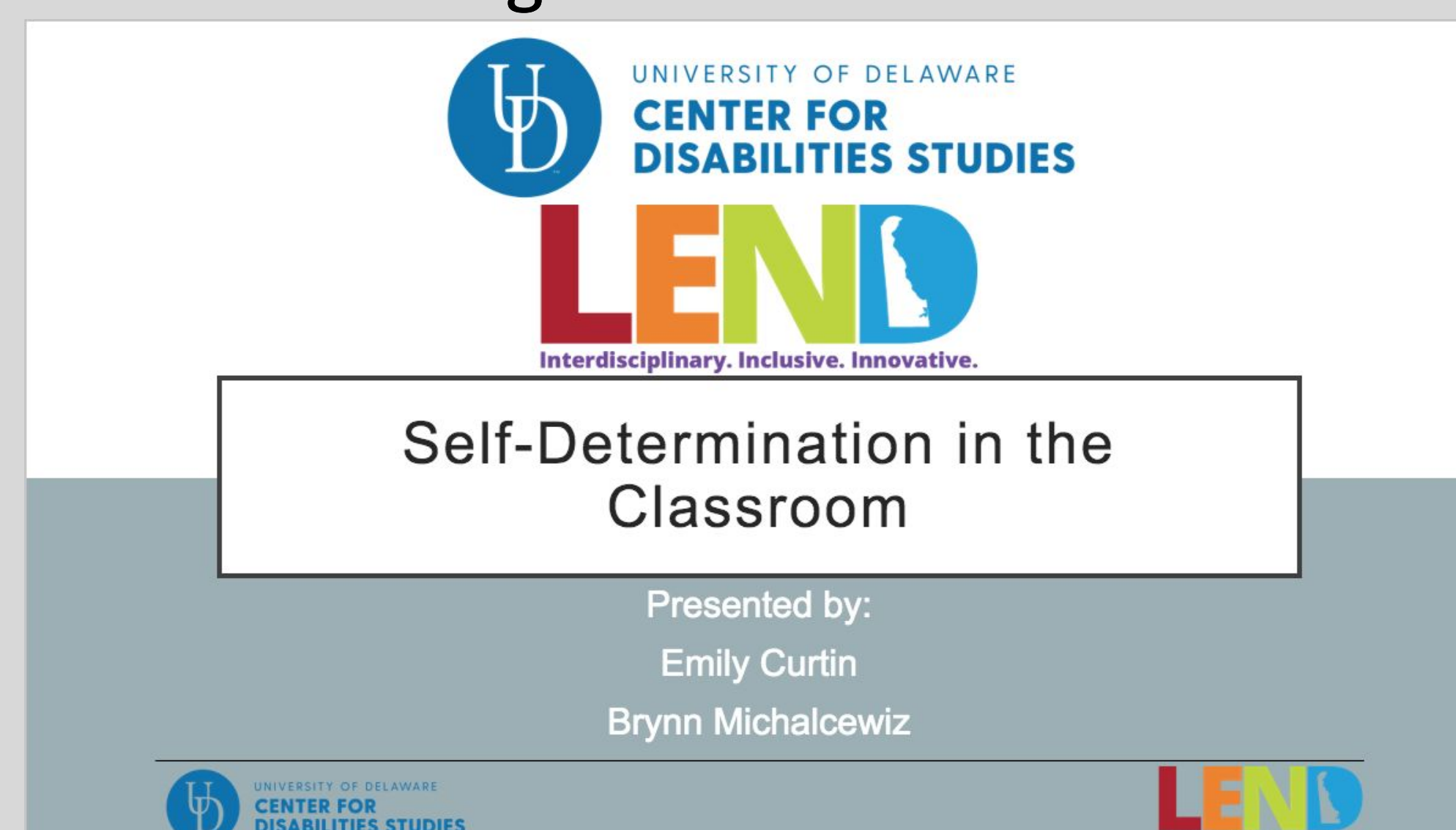
Our final product is a training for educators that focuses on self-determination. Our training includes assessments that teachers can give their students to help identify the skills they have and the skills they need to develop, as well as curricula for teaching these skills.

### Our Focus

- We ensured that we provided suggestions that can be incorporated into a typical classroom curriculum. For recommended curricula that require separate instructional time, we confirmed that they were well-researched and found to be effective.

### Challenges

- It was difficult to find resources for students in elementary school. Most self-determination research focuses on secondary students and the transition from school to adult life.
- We are finding it difficult to deliver this training to educators. In the process of developing this training, we experienced closures due to the pandemic and the loss of our training medium.



## Recommendations

- The next phase of this training is to implement it either online or in-person. We hope to be able to present this information to educators so that they may start incorporating self-determination into their lessons.
- For future training and research, we recommend that focus be placed on elementary intervention. There is a need for self-determination instruction in the younger grades, but there is limited guidance on how to develop these skills.

## Reflection

Our project connects to the tenet of interdisciplinary practice because it is a collaborative project between a Special Education trainee and a School Psychology trainee. Our different perspectives and experiences resulted in a training that blends evidence-based practice with feasible interventions that can be incorporated into any classroom.

*Curtin: As a future school psychologist, this project equipped me with resources to share with educators. It also taught me the importance of self-determination and ways that I can foster self-determination during daily interactions with students.*

*Michalcewiz: As a future educator, I feel that this project has prepared me to meet the diverse needs of all my future students. I have a better understanding of why self-determination is so important and how I can support my students in developing these skills.*

## Citations

- Shogren, K. A., Shaw, L. A., Raley, S. K., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (2018). Exploring the effect of disability, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status on scores on the Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report. *Exceptional Children, 85*(1), 10-27. doi:10.1177/0014402918782150
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Shogren, K. A., Little, T. D., & Lopez, S. J. (2017). *Development of self-determination through the life-course*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Science and Business Media.
- White, K., Flanagan, T. D., & Nadig, A. (2018). Examining the relationship between self-determination and quality of life in young adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 30*(6), 735-754. doi: 10.1007/s10882-018-9616-y