Self-Determination:
Paving the Way to Independence

Lighting the Way Conference 2016
Sara Hansen
Kara Youngworth
Mesa Groen

Advocacy and Leadership Project (ALP)

- A training & technical assistance project for promoting self-determination and self-advocacy by middle school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Application submitted by the South Dakota University Center on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (SDUCEDD), Center for Disabilities to the South Dakota Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Awarded $25,000 July 2015

THANK YOU!
Arlene Poncelet, Director SD Council on DD

Teachers:
- Ashley Fenner, West Central Middle School
- Kara Youngworth, Harrisburg South Middle School
- Mesa Groen, Harrisburg North Middle School

Elaine A. Roberts, Executive Director
South Dakota Parent Connection
3701 W. 49th Street Suite 102
Sioux Falls, SD 57106
605.361.3171
www.sdparent.org

Overview
Self-advocacy & leadership program for middle school youth with intellectual & developmental disabilities

Partners
- SD Parent Connection
- Harrisburg North Middle School
- Harrisburg South Middle School
- West Central School District
**Program Benefits**

- Focus on implementation of self-advocacy as a component of self-determination
- Development of leadership
- Self-determination established as a research and evidence-based instruction practice
- Research evidence demonstrates youth with higher levels of self-determination achieve better post-school outcomes related to employment, postsecondary education, & independent living

**Program Components**

- Key Elements of Self-Determination Instruction using the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)
- Instruction in self-advocacy skills emphasized as one element of self-determination
- Leadership development as a component of self-determination

**4 Essential Characteristics of Self-Determined Behavior**

1. Acting autonomously
2. Behavior is self-regulated
3. Behavior is self-initiated in response to both internal and external events in a psychologically empowered manner
4. Behavior results from and manifested by self-realized understandings and personal identity

Person is the “causal agent” of their behavior such that he/she is the cause of what they do and what happens in his/her life

**Elements of Self-Determination**

- Choice-Making Skills
- Decision-Making Skills
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Goal-Setting and Attainment Skills
- Self-instruction
- Self-Regulation/Self-Management Skills
- Self-Advocacy and Leadership Skills
- Internal locus of control, efficacy, and outcome expectations
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Knowledge/Realization

**ALP Goals**

- Measurable increase in self-advocacy and self-determination using the
  - ARC Self-Determination Scale
  - AIR Self-Determination Scale
- Increase implementation of self-advocacy, self-determination and PCT instructional strategies
- Increased participation and engagement of middle school youth in the development of their IEP plans and/or transition meetings
ALP Goals

- Increased ability of middle school youth to identify and describe their personal learning style, strengths and support needs, and accommodations
- Increased engagement of successful young adult leaders with middle school youth as models and exemplars

ALP Components

1) Training in validated instructional strategies for teaching self-advocacy and self-determination
2) Person-Centered Thinking training to be provided by SD Parent Connection with a focus on
   - development of self-directed postsecondary goals
   - implementation of self-directed IEP strategies
3) Provision of technical assistance, onsite training, support and evaluation of impact

ALP Implementation Steps

1. Two day training on SDLI in August 2015
2. Each teacher develops and implements an SDLMI program strategy/plan for students
   a) Programmatic description of how each step of the 3 phases of the SDLMI model will be implemented
      - Setting a goal
      - Taking action
      - Adjusting the goal or plan
3. Each teacher develops and implements an SDLMI program strategy/plan for the students they work with
   a) 2 or more measurable goals in the area of self-advocacy and at least one of the 13 self-determination areas for at least 4 students they are working with
   b) Linking self-determination and self-advocacy skills to instruction across content areas
4. Data collection plan describing how student progress will be evaluated including
   - What measures will be used to collect data
     - Arc Self-Determination Scale - Pre/Post
     - Goal Attainment Scores (GAS)
   - How data will be summarized and reported
   - How summary data will be used by the student, family and teacher to inform instructional decision-making
ALP Implementation Steps

4. Strategies for recruitment & engagement of young adult self-advocates and graduates of youth leadership forums as mentors including possibility of involving middle school youth in youth leadership activities
5. Evidence and documentation that plan/strategy described above has been implement
6. Compilation of a reflective workbook style manual (portfolio) that describes the strategy used for the implementation of the SDLMI strategy developed and implemented by each teacher.

Significant Lessons Learned

- Access to middle school youth is through teachers
- Middle school development are formative years emotionally and cognitively (This American Life - http://www.thisamericanlife.org/archive/episode/449/middle-school)
- Substantial difference between the experiences of youth with and without disabilities
  - dating, choices, goals, problem solving, self-management

Active Learning for Professional Development & Teacher Training

The Cone of Learning

Self-advocates and self-determination

Self-Determination

Kara Youngworth
Harrisburg South Middle

- The middle school classroom is designed for students with moderate to severe disabilities, serving students in 6-8 grade. Seven students (diagnoses: autism, cognitive, multiple disabilities) are on the teacher’s caseload, with one student coming into the classroom specifically to work on social/living skills.
The majority of students are in the life skills classroom setting for math, language arts and social/living skills. One student does not attend social studies and science classes, instead works on pre-vocational activities during those periods. Teaching staff includes: one teacher and three paraprofessionals.

Hailey: Hailey did awesome advocating for herself and going to teachers. She went on vacation and was able to go to teachers and ask for homework. She also had a death in the family and went to teachers to let them know she would be gone for that as well. Hailey would go to the teachers to ask for clarification or help as needed and was not afraid to ask questions. If she was not able to get assignment completed on time, she would go to teachers and ask for extensions and explain why they were not done. She did need a little help with prioritizing assignments in study hall but only had a few late assignments all year long!

James: James did well throughout the year as well. He is now talking about getting a job as soon as he can and is really interested in working at Subway. He started off the year wanting to play football in the NFL but as the year went on started talking about things that were more achievable. He talked about being a personal trainer or doing something with athletic training as sports are a big interest to him. James got better about advocating for himself and using the conference room or going to a different environment if he knew he had to get work done in study hall. He is easily distracted so would choose to sit in a different room and work. He also improved his ability to ask for help as needed. He realized a lot about himself and how he likes to receive help. He found out that he does not like getting help unless he asks for it.

Ann: Ann did well throughout the year also. She scored very low on the ARC and so we talked a lot about making choices and doing things on her own. She relies heavily on her parents to do things for her. At the beginning of the year she told me she was not going to get a job after school but live with her parents forever. By the end of the year she was talking about working at a pet store or being a pet groomer. She has a love for animals and her dog is very special to her. Ann improved her ability to advocate for herself and make sure she had things like flashcards to help her be successful in the general education classroom. Socially, Ann struggled throughout the school year. She would call her mom at lunch crying and tell her she had no friends and no one to sit by at lunch. By the end of the year, she had a group of girls to hang out with and had established some simple friendships. She and Hailey became good friends and enjoyed spending time together as well.

Others: I did have a couple of students on my caseload that I did not include in the Grant because I did not see them throughout the day as they were integrated into the general education classroom. I did see improvements in their self-advocacy throughout the year as well. One of the students is extremely shy and before this year would never have gone and asked for clarification from a teacher. At the end of the year, we went and toured the High School as she will be there next year. She went to her future case manager and asked how she could change her schedule to get involved with FFA and take Ag classes. Horse are of interest to her and her asking to make those changes is a big step for her as well.

Questions? Comments? Conversation starters?

For more information, email Sara at sara.hansen@usd.edu and we’ll get you connected with the best resource for the topic or inquiry.

Kara.Youngworth@k12.sd.us
Mesa.groen@k12.sd.us
References

