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Exceeding Expectations: A Historical Analysis of Student Power and Self-Determination

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Abstract

This paper explores theories of student power and self-determination that evolved over the last century, and their relationships to general and special education practices. Historical events, such as the industrial revolution, changes to the workforce, and responses from the educational community are explored through the eyes of educational sociologists and theorists. Lines are drawn, connecting students of lower economic classes, students with disabilities, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and "self-determination" as described by the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To improve student graduation, postsecondary participation and income rates, policy makers and community members must provide both the capacity, instruction and opportunity for all students to learn skills of self-determination, and design their educational programs. Indicators to increase student self-determination are organized into a table for planning.

> "The difficult thing to explain about how middle class kids get middle class jobs is why others let them. The difficult thing to explain about how working class kids get working class jobs is why they let themselves." Paul E. Willis, *Learning to Labour* (p.1)

Introduction

The difficult thing to explain about education is why we create solutions that lead us back to old problems. The ever-expanding mainspring of education policy initiatives is wound up through new research and troubling findings. Changes to

requirements for a high school diploma are an excellent example of this perpetual motion.

Poor student outcomes have resulted in tougher graduation requirements across many U.S. states. As more and more students fail to meet these new challenges, the educational community responds with new/old initiatives - a homeostasis of change/no change. The National Center for Education Statistics, in its report titled *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999* stated:

> Over the last 10 years, the percentage of young adults completing high school has been relatively stable for whites and blacks. During the same period, the percentage completing high school through an alternative to a regular diploma has increased, with 1999 alternative completion rates of about 9 to 11 percent for white, black, and Hispanic young adults. The net effect of these recent changes has been stable dropout and high school completion rates for young adults in the 1990s. These findings suggest that the emphasis in recent years on decreasing dropout rates as well as revising standards and high school graduation requirements may have translated into increased use of alternative methods of high school completion, rather than an overall decrease in dropout rates and an increase in the proportion of young adults holding a high school credential. (Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, and Chapman, p. 40)

The same report indicates that the number of students who achieved the General Educational Development (GED) credential as an alternative method of high school completion rose from 4.2% in 1988 to 9.2% in 1999. One can see how higher graduation requirements have led to an increase in alternative completion techniques (e.g., GED) and this increase has led to an overall review and changes to the GED (R.J. Murnane, J.B. Willet, and K.P. Boudett, 1995, American Council on Education, 2000). Educational problems tend to become circular through adaptations to crisis, selective listening to research data and amnesia regarding past efforts.

The educational reform movement comes with costs and benefits for many of our students. As we grapple with poor test results and a triage of remedies, students are moving forward to their senior year with or without the skills necessary to meet new state or local requirements for a high school diploma with family income weighing in heavily as a determining factor: "In 1999, 11.0 percent of students from families in the lowest 20 percent of the income distribution dropped out of high school; by way of comparison, 5.0 percent in the middle 60 percent of the income distribution dropped out, as did 2.1 percent of students from families with incomes in the top 20 percent." (Kaufman, et al., p. 6) Although students who successfully meet these new requirements will probably increase their employment and

postsecondary opportunities, students who struggle may wonder about their future prospects. Worse still, as we can see from the above report, students who are not successful in an increasingly challenging academic environment may choose or feel forced to leave.

Increasing student options and choices within an educational system not of student design or control is paradoxical. Everyone agrees that it is desirable for youth to make socially positive choices as they grow up. To successfully function within a society implies living within its rules, rules that must be imparted from adult to child. However, to achieve social progress, citizens must have the judgement to adapt or sometimes suspend certain rules to improve results.

Would there be civil rights laws without sit-ins, demonstrations and bus boycotts? Would we have achieved civil rights legislation sooner if certain leaders of the movement promoted violent instead of non-violent forms of resistance? The fact is that though arrested and vilified by many in his time, we now celebrate a national holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. Educators are caught in this paradox of empowerment and control as youth are expected to learn how to make good choices, while many if not most educational choices are made for them in the areas of curricular content, pedagogy, and evaluation. What's left?

As the focus of this discussion changes from the generic student to specific groups of disadvantaged youth, questions of student choice develop a sharper edge. Students with disabilities, as the most extreme example, are educated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Specific individualized objectives are identified, implemented and measured on an annual basis, if not more often. Provisions of IDEA require student involvement in the planning process, especially in the secondary years.

After a review of information provided by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the National Council on Disability (2000) found that school districts in most states have not implemented provisions for student involvement in post-school (i.e., transition) planning with little consequence from State or Federal monitoring agencies:

> If a purpose of an IEP meeting is the consideration of transition services, invitees must include the student and representatives of other agencies likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. If the student does not attend, the public agency must take steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered. 'I've never been asked, 'Hey, what's your perspective? What can I do to make your education better?' And I feel like you can ask the parents all you want, but if you really want to get down to the heart of the problem and how

> the students are being affected, maybe you should ask them first.' - A high school senior with a disability from South Carolina on having input to the IEP OSEP found that 38 states (76%) had failed to ensure compliance with these requirements, including the following examples: In two New Hampshire public agencies, in 14 of 17 records reviewed by OSEP for students 16 years or older, the student was not invited to the IEP meeting. In Massachusetts, OSEP reviewed the files of 18 students ages 16 and older in public agencies A, E, and F, and found that three of six students in agency A, four of six in agency E, and three of six in agency F did not attend their most recent IEP meeting. Four teachers and an administrator responsible for the administration and supervision of special education programs in those agencies told OSEP that they do not invite the student to the IEP meeting even if one of the purposes of the meeting is the consideration of transition services. (p. 107)

This comes as no surprise. How can a system that tightly controls and monitors the education and conduct of a given child, simultaneously relinquish even a small amount of control to that same student? It is tempting to confuse the concept of "self-determination" with the concept of "power." "Power," as Bennett, deMarrais and LeCompte (1995, p. 171) put it, "refers to one's ability to realize one's will, even if others resist." One's "will" could be socially and educationally positive or not - no judgement or value is necessarily placed on power. For instance, a student who physically threatens his or her teacher to get a better grade, and succeeds, may be said to have more power than the teacher does. However, if the teacher has the threatening student arrested and then gives the student a poor grade anyway, the teacher has more power. Power is about overcoming obstacles to achieve something. What is complicated about power has to do with the nature and subtleties of both the obstacles and the achievement.

"Self-determination" can be considered a subset of power and refers to a more refined and deliberate set of behaviors and descriptors. Much recent literature in the disability community has centered on developing self-determination as a set of strategies toward greater independence from public assistance, and toward employment, postsecondary, and community living outcomes. Developing self-determination among students with disabilities means developing specific planning skills within a supportive context.

Martin and Huber Marshall wrote of "an evolving definition of self-determination in the special education literature." (1995, p. 147) Students who develop these characteristics

> ...know how to choose - they know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs,

> self-determined individuals choose goals, then doggedly pursue them. This involves asserting an individual's presence, making his or her needs known, evaluating progress towards meeting goals, adjusting performance and creating unique approaches to solve problems. (1995, p. 147)

Although the self-determined individual could carefully plan out an elaborate crime, socially positive outcomes are attributed to people who plan with others towards mutually agreed upon goals. Few people would argue that students who possess these skills may turn into more capable adults, yet in light of more rigorous academic standards these skills may not rise to the level of math or English as essential components of a course of study.

However, if we are to increase graduation, postsecondary and income rates for all, students must be active participants in the construction and implementation of curricula. They will develop both self-awareness and self-esteem and lead us to key decisions about their long-term goals and supportive short-term educational and life plans. Additionally, students must learn to evaluate their efforts and change their plans or goals or both, as necessary.

This is not limited to special education. It must begin with career development strategies in general education, with special education services as just one support among many. Creating supportive environments for these strategies to occur has not been a part of our educational traditions. To better understand student power as an earlier construct, and student self-determination as a more recent solution to problems in educational reform, we must study the foundations. The historic and conceptual roots of student power and self-determination reach back over 100 years in the literature. The development of special education as an independent entity, wanting acceptance in the broader educational community, provides an interesting insight into differentiated educational tracks and student choice.

Can we effectively make the leap from traditional notions of power and dominance toward notions of collaborative self-determination? By examining the founding principles and theories of general education, certain persistent problems will be explored about the nature and practice of education with respect to disadvantaged groups of students. The solutions we have developed may have a profound impact as we move beyond the expectations schools assign to each student and students assign to themselves.

Education and Mass Production

Before 1900, fewer than 10 percent of the United States' fourteen to seventeen-year-olds were attending public or private secondary schools (Oakes, p. 17). Because most young adults were

needed to help out at home or join the workforce to make money for the family, schools maintained rather homogeneous demographics. White families from the upper and upper-middle class were generally the only people in a position to send youngsters to school. As a form of social reproduction, schools functioned quite well keeping students from the lower classes from ascending the ladder toward a higher standard of living as adults while protecting students from privileged families from manual labor.

This changed in response to a series of events. The first was the industrial revolution and a shift away from an agrarian economy. To run the factories and engineer new products and systems to create those products, our economy required trained professionals certified to perform discrete tasks. Max Weber viewed education at the early part of the twentieth century as an example of conflicting purposes. Prior to the industrial revolution, education was meant to produce what Weber called the "cultivated man", broadening the student's horizons in areas of arts and culture, preparing students to join the ruling elite as a part of a genetic lineage. Then, the dawn of industry and a civil service created the need for educational systems based on specialization, the development of expertise, and examinations to measure competence and rational thought, and to support bureaucratic "structures of domination."

This modern approach to education appeared to favor competence over bloodlines and could therefore expand the opportunities of the lower classes. However, Weber wrote that the acquisition of the "educational patent" (p. 241) has resulted in a certification process supporting

> claims for intermarriages with the notable families (in business offices people naturally hope for preferment with regard to the chief's daughter), claims to be admitted into the circles that adhere to 'codes of honor,' claims for a 'respectable' remuneration rather than remuneration for work done, claims for assured advancement and old-age insurance, and, above all, claims to monopolize socially and economically advantageous positions." (p. 241)

Schools, under this construct, existed to provide industry with a workforce necessary to maintain and reproduce economic conditions for each of the socioeconomic groups over the long term. Various levels of skilled and unskilled labor, professional and non-professional, were needed to produce goods and services, and schools were expected to create good employees and employers. In other words, schools were not required to expand student opportunities and choices so much as to make certain that each class could fulfil a particular role and function to support this new economy.

However, there were other ideas about the preparation for life after school, as described by Jeannie Oakes (1985). Charles

Eliot, in 1892, was commissioned to chair the Committee of Ten on Secondary Studies of the National Education Association. Moving beyond their original mandate to recommend a standardized curriculum for college preparation, Eliot's committee created four courses of study intended to improve educational conditions and postsecondary access for all students: classical, Latin-scientific, modern languages and English. Each of these would be acceptable for college admission yet would allow for direct entry into the workforce upon graduation, a radical departure from differentiated curricula that supported separate college preparatory and vocational sequences.

> It is a curious fact that we Americans habitually underestimate the capacity of pupils at almost every stage of education from the primary school through the university...It seems to me problematic that the proportion of grammar school children incapable of pursuing geometry, algebra, and a foreign language would turn out to be much smaller than we now imagine. (as cited in Oakes, p. 18)

Eliot recommended, through the Committee of Ten, a different approach toward secondary education, opposing the separation of college-bound from non-college bound students, in favor of schools that create educated children regardless of future plans.

According to Oakes, what kept this vision of a blended educational system from realization were the changing demographics that occurred through immigration during the first decades of the twentieth century (Oakes, p. 19). Arriving mainly from Europe at a rate of nearly a million per year, these people were mostly poor and uneducated. However, along with those who were moving from rural America to the cities, these immigrants were eager to work, yet found few opportunities. Not surprisingly, schools were experiencing a similar explosion, with a new high school built for each day of each year between 1890 and 1918. The demographics of public school students changed so that by 1909 58 percent of the students in thirty-seven cities were of foreign-born parentage (Oakes, p.19). Oakes quoted the historian Lawrence Cremin, who wrote:

> Schools that really wanted to educate these youngsters could not get by with surface changes. The mere fact that children in a single schoolroom spoke a half-dozen different languages, none of them English, inevitably altered the life of that schoolroom. And the problem went far beyond language, for each language implied a unique heritage and unique attitudes toward teacher, parents, schoolmates - indeed, toward the school itself. Not only baths, but a vast variety of other activities that could not be found in any syllabus began to appear. Manners, cleanliness, dress, the simple business of getting along together in the

> schoolroom - these things had to be taught more insistently and self-consciously than ever. (as cited in Oakes, p. 20)

To cope with both the changing classroom demographics and the needs of industry for a trained workforce, the concept of differentiated education was developed. With its roots in social Darwinism, children from different backgrounds and social classes were thought to differ greatly in their potential to think abstractly and achieve success in college and in the workplace. Oakes quoted a superintendent of Cleveland schools, who at the time wrote:

> It is obvious that the educational needs of children in a district where the streets are well paved and clean, where the homes are spacious and surrounded by lawns and trees, where the language of the child's play fellows is pure and where life in general is permeated with the spirit and ideals of America - it is obvious that the educational needs of such a child are radically different from those of the child who lives in a foreign and tenement section." (as cited in Oakes, p. 35)

Creating separate educational paths based on student characteristics won the day. A concise rationale for differentiated education came from the National Education Association's 1910 Report of the Committee on the Place of Industries in Public Education:

> 1. Industry, as a controlling factor in social progress, has for education a fundamental and permanent significance. 2. Educational standards, applicable in an age of handicraft, presumably need radical change in the present day of complex and highly specialized industrial development. 3. The social aims of education and the psychological needs of childhood alike require that industrial (manual-constructive) activities form an important part of school occupations... 4. The differences among children as to aptitudes, interests, economic resources, and prospective careers furnish the basis for rational as opposed to a merely formal distinction between elementary, secondary, and higher education. (as cited in Oakes, p. 30)

Although this early report recommended limiting the number of years a student attends school as the basis for differentiating instruction, what eventually evolved were instructional sequences based on "conceptions of differences among students - many of them class related." (Oakes, p. 30) Students were not provided options for educational development, but were placed into courses.

To summarize, in the early part of the twentieth century, educational placement options changed from school/no school to college preparatory/vocational, primarily based on class distinction. As we shall see, this tension set the stage and continues to influence educational decisions today.

Meritocracy vs. Sociolinguistics within the Context of Class

The twentieth century saw a movement away from caste distinctions towards distinctions of talent and merit. By mid-century, education had made an important shift in that some students from the lower classes gained more power to realize their will through increases in their perceived merit on the part of education officials. However, beneath all of this were economic class distinctions between students. Michael Young (1958) lampooned this situation as it existed in the British educational system at the middle of the century. "Meritocracy" is a term he used to describe the notion that through hard work and diligence any person could achieve any goal. He described the failures of the grammar schools to keep low-income students, who were identified as being gifted, from quitting school. Dialect, in the United Kingdom has long been a common indicator of social class. Part of one's climb from a lower class to the elite has been one's ability to assume an aristocratic style of speech. "The social ladder was so long - the gap between the styles of life of upper and lower classes so wide - that promising children had to begin their climb through the schools as early as possible." (Young, p. 54)

To wait until a later age to move into a more challenging atmosphere resulted in students who were "too old to shake off their origins and so overcome their handicap." (Young, p. 54) In other words, if a student from a poor family learns to behave (through speech and manners) in a way that reflects wealth, the student has a much better chance at college and a profession that pays well. This rather Pygmalion focus on a few very talented, but impoverished, children leaves the remainder to be vocationally prepared in accordance to their perceived potential for generalized work. "In the balanced view of sociology we have to consider the failures as well as the successes. Every selection of one is a rejection of the many. Let us be frank and admit that we have failed to assess the mental state of the rejected, and so secure their necessary adjustment." (Young, p. 15)

Key areas of informal and formal evaluation touched on by Young, and expanded on by Pierre Bourdieu, are the sociolinguistic patterns of students by the school system. Language, along with other cultural factors, controls the thought patterns of the individual. The extent to which those thought patterns replicate the language of the academic culture will influence the ability of the individual to assimilate into and succeed within academic environments. Bourdieu and Passeron wrote (1977) that the main difficulty in bridging the gap between

popular and academic sociolinguistics is not just a matter of the substitution of words and pronunciation, but is embedded in the way in which academia perceives working class culture.

> There is a world of difference between the experience of school that is prepared for by a childhood spent in a family circle where words define the reality of things, and the experience of unreality given to working-class children by the scholastic acquisition of a language which tends to make unreal the things it speaks of because it makes up their whole reality: the 'pure', 'correct' - i.e. 'corrected' - language of the classroom is opposed to the language the teacher's marginal notes stigmatize as 'vulgar' or 'common', and even more to the anti-language of the boarding school, where children from rural areas, confronted with the simultaneous experience of forced acculturation and insidious counter-acculturation, can only choose between duplication and acceptance of exclusion. (Bourdieu and Passeron, p. 119)

To overcome barriers of sociolinguistics, and effectively demonstrate merit, working class students must choose to either adapt their thought patterns or persevere in the face of resistance on the part of the academic community.

Economic Reproduction, Control and Student Power

As we move through the twentieth century toward the present, scholars have carefully studied the critical relationships that exist between student, school, and community to assess the power each exerts over the other to achieve specific outcomes. For the community at large, schools and students represent a means through which cities and towns can retain and improve economic conditions. If schools create a stable local workforce, company profits will increase through a corresponding increase in productivity.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) studied the coercive strategies schools utilize to control student behavior and reproduce the economic status quo. The "integrative function" of education serves the corporate community by delivering students who are ready to join the workforce at starting salaries that correspond to each student's socioeconomic status. "In promoting what John Dewey once called the 'social continuity of life,' by integrating new generations into the social order, the schools are constrained to justify and reproduce inequality rather than correct it." (Bowles and Gintis, page 102) Echoing Weber, schools exist in part to promote the current order of the surrounding community by educating students about their particular role.

Bowles and Gintis further studied the systemic pattern of domination that schools utilize to control not only student behavior, but the behavior of teachers as well. Teacher autonomy

has been greatly reduced and his or her role is more subservient to the bureaucratic structures each teacher functions within. Discipline, for example, has changed from the personalized authority of the teacher to the rules and procedures created by the school to be shared by all teachers.

> Unlike the teachers in the chaotic early nineteenth-century district schools, modern teachers exercise less personal power and rely more heavily on regulations promulgated by higher authorities. Although frequently prey to arbitrary intervention by parents and other community members, the nineteenth century teacher was the boss of the classroom. The modern teacher is in a more ambiguous position. The very rules and regulations which add a patina of social authority to his or her commands at the same time rigidly circumscribe the teacher's freedom of action. (Bowles and Gintis, p. 39)

Through behavior modification techniques, grading, and other systems of control, teachers, as social proxy, reward students who "conform to and strengthen" acceptable social patterns and punish those who choose divergent paths.

That is not to say that students are passive partners in this process. Many theorists have studied classroom patterns of control and the reciprocal determinism that exists between teacher and student, each side looking for weaknesses and opportunities to gain advantage over the other. Although there is not enough room to review all of the various theories of control, Berlak and Berlak (1981) presented an interesting approach which included room for student control and "transformational" patterns of resolution where neither the teacher nor the student is in complete control of the classroom situation. Described as the four "control dilemmas", each may be used to identify the locus of and extent of classroom control.

Whole Child v. Child as Student (realms): The first dilemma focuses on the "pull, on the one hand, towards taking control over or responsibility for a wide range of realms of the child's development" (p. 261), much like a parent, and the pull in the other direction to define a more narrow range of control over the child as student, taking responsibility for teaching school curricula exclusively.

Teacher v. Child Control (time): This dilemma captures the extent to which either the teacher or the student will control when the student begins activities and the duration of each activity. The sequencing of activities and the role students play in decision making are also studied.

Teacher v. Child Control (operations): The teacher's control over the techniques and process of learning and student conduct are studied under this dilemma. Is the student given very specific instructions on how to complete an assignment, or is he or she granted extreme latitude so long as the right answer is arrived at?

Teacher v. Child Control (standards): Control over the setting of classroom standards and the monitoring of the implementation of those standards defines the final dilemma. To what extent do students get to evaluate their own work? By whose measure is that work evaluated?

These broad definitions point to a set of behaviors through which we can measure student and teacher power within a classroom setting. Presumably, when the balance of power tilts toward the teacher attainment of accepted educational standards will occur. When tilting toward the student, assuming the student exerts an oppositional force, other goals will be attained - educational or otherwise. Paul Willis (1977) explored the lives of working class teenage youth in a small British industrial town. In particular, he was interested in the relationship between their vocational choices, their efforts to thwart school authority figures, and, most importantly, "having a laff"(p. 31). One group of young men, referred to as "the lads" spent most of their time demonstrating to authority figures the futility of trying to control their pranks. Willis spent a great deal of effort defining the difference between rejecting schoolwork and not appearing stupid.

> The ribbing or 'pisstaking' is similarly rough and often directed at the same individuals for the same things. Often this is someone's imagined stupidity. This is ironic in view of 'the lads' general rejection of school work, and shows a ghost of conventional values which they would be quick to deny. Though 'the lads' usually resist conventional ways of showing their abilities, certainly the ablest like to be thought of as 'quick'. Certain cultural values, like fast talking and humour, do anyway register in some academic subjects. Joey, for instance, walks a very careful tightrope in English between 'laffing' with 'the lads' and doing the occasional 'brilliant' essay. (Willis, p. 32)

Apple (1982) wrote about Willis' work, academic resistance, and "the lads'" contradictory results. Students from working class backgrounds may actually control events within the classroom setting through "subversion of authority, working the system, creating diversions and enjoyment, building an informal group to counter the official activities of the school day", yet nonetheless aid in the reproduction of class structure by repudiating academic patterns of behavior. He further postulated that all of the above forms of resistance

> are the exact opposite of what the administrators and teachers want. Hence, if workers are interchangeable and work itself is undifferentiated and generalized, thereby looking about the same from job to job, the school plays an important part in enabling the lads to develop penetrations into it. At the same time, however, the limitations are clearly there, limitations

> that just as clearly end up tying such working-class youths to a labor market and preparing them for generalized and standardized work. (Apple, p. 101)

The educators, parents, and students in Willis' study were unwitting partners in perpetuating the legions of workers with low skills. And although "the lads" were powerful in asserting their will in the face of resistance, their efforts were not organized or guided, and had little, if any, political or economic impact. Willis' ethnographic research served to underscore both the works of Young and Bourdieu as they pertain to youth neither able nor willing to emulate academic norms of speech and behavior and their subsequent lack of opportunity. Further, Weber would recognize this educational system that reproduces economic conditions for a socioeconomic group of students.

The Changing Needs of Employers and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act

If we were to observe "the lads" as adults today, they might look something like the characters in the film, *The Full Monty*. After the local steel plant closed, each of the men in this story ended up either unemployed or in a job that represented generalized work in today's economy: the security guard. In an act of self-determined resistance, and in defiance of local laws, these men put on an "All-Male Review" shedding all of their security guard uniforms in a local performance. One might ask these men: Do you believe your behavior will lead towards a better job with better pay, beyond the fast buck? The answer would clearly be "No".

The film makes an eloquent statement on the current effects of past efforts in preparing a workforce for a changing economy. In the U.S. the labor market has undergone several key changes. These changes can be summarized if one links wages to skill level and certification. For instance, while the number of low-skilled manufacturing jobs has decreased dramatically, manufacturing jobs that require college degrees or other postsecondary certifications have increased. Workers with lower skills and less education are forced to consider employment in the service sector with a corresponding cut in salary. In a labor market projection, Silvestri (1997) wrote for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:

> About half of the fastest-growing occupations require education or training beyond high school; the top three require at least a bachelor's degree and had median weekly earnings in 1996 that were much higher than the average for all full-time wage and salary workers ($483). About a third of the occupations with the largest job growth require some type of postsecondary education or training. The remainder of the occupations ... require high school graduation or less education,

and most had below-average earnings in 1996. (Silvestri, p.62)

This projection is reinforced by a subsequent Bureau of Labor Statistics study (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

In response to a series of previous reports with similar findings (Commission on Skills of the American Workforce, 1990; Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991; William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, 1988), the federal government passed the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) in 1994. Jointly administered by both the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor, School-to-Work programs contain three core elements as described in a combined U.S. Departments of Education and Labor report to Congress (1996):

> School-based learning is instruction and curriculum that integrate academic and vocational learning. The program of study must enable all students to meet high academic standards to prepare for post-secondary education and careers. School-based learning incorporates career awareness, career exploration and counseling programs; the opportunity to select a career major by the 11th grade, and regularly scheduled student evaluations.
>
> Work-based learning means that workplaces become active learning environments by engaging employers as partners with educators in providing opportunities for all students to participate in high-quality work experiences. It gives students the chance to apply abstract concepts and principles while learning vital workplace skills in a hands-on, 'real-life' setting.
>
> Connecting activities are the 'glue' to hold local STW efforts together. Linking schools and workplaces does not happen naturally. It requires a range of activities to integrate school and work to ensure that the student is not the only thread that ties the two. Connecting activities match students with employers, secure school site mentors as liaisons with employers, provide technical assistance to employers and schools, link participants with community services, collect and analyze information regarding post-program outcomes for participants, and connect youth-development strategies with employer and industry strategies for upgrading workers' skills." (p.10)

Emphasis by State and Federal officials was placed on increasing student self-awareness in terms of interest, aptitudes, and career preference. Goldberger and Kazis (1996) emphasized this point through example.

> ...a program organized around the health care industry

> could include a student newspaper, a school-based health clinic, and an arts component, as well as a science lab. Students with an interest in business or computers might have opportunities to pursue their interests through an exploration of management issues in the health industry. As students became clearer and more specific about their interests and career plans - including deciding against pursuing health-related careers - program staff would take the initiative to help find or create avenues for students to pursue emerging passions." (p. 550)

In Utah, students and parents were involved extensively in a statewide guidance and counseling initiative. Kimball, Gardner and Ellison (1995) studied the impact of Utah's comprehensive guidance program on career planning, comparing results from high implementation high schools to low implementation high schools. These results included: (1) increases in student perceptions of readiness for jobs and postsecondary education; (2) increases in student academic achievement; and (3) an increase in the number of students who were able to describe their educational program. Growing student self-awareness combined with a greater awareness of career pathways and improved options will lead toward less tracking and greater high school completion and postsecondary participation rates. However, the STWOA is scheduled to twilight in 2001. Lacking federal support, it is unclear how school-to-work programs will survive, let alone increase in number, over time.

Student Self-Determination, Rehabilitation and Special Education

During the time that school-to-work programs were developing, self-determination became a subject of research in the disability field. In 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasized student active involvement in transition planning. Secondary student preferences and interests must now be taken into account and students invited into the planning process. The 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 included a statement of rights for individuals with disabilities:

> Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of the individual to live independently; enjoy self-determination; make choices; contribute to society; pursue meaningful careers; and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational mainstream of American society..." (Section 2. Findings; Purpose; Policy)

Much research went into defining and measuring self-

determination as a consequence of these policy decisions. Freedom, choice, control, action, and outcome are elements in each definition developed during this time (Wehmeyer & Berkobien, 1991; Campau & Wolman, 1993; Ward, 1988; Field & Hoffman, 1994). Project directors, representing research projects for self-determination funded under the U.S. Department of Education's office of Special Education Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), achieved consensus in 1993 on the following working definition of self-determination: "choosing and enacting choices to control one's life - to the maximum extent possible - based on knowing and valuing oneself, and in pursuit of one's own needs, interests, and values." (Campeau & Wolman, 1993, pg. 2) This definition emphasizes the individual's ability to understand and value personal characteristics and pursue a specific set of goals.

Self-determination for students with disabilities involves self-knowledge and self-esteem within a context that includes school, home, and community. The student must develop an internal capacity for decision-making, a capacity that is nourished by the adults and peers with whom the student is in contact. This can come naturally or through structured programs involving large and small choice making opportunities that the child participates in as he or she grows up within integrated settings. However, as Halpern (1998) put it, "Students will learn how to do transition planning only by doing transition planning." (p. 168) In other words, self-determination skills are developed through practice and encouragement.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) tested the relationship between self-determined behavior and positive adult outcomes among 80 youths with cognitive disabilities factoring in levels of intelligence and types of disabilities. Of the students contacted one year after graduation, 80% of the students rated as highly self-determined were working for pay compared to 43% of the students who were rated on the same scale as low. Of those employed, the former students who were rated as highly self-determined averaged $4.26 per hour, while those in the low group averaged $1.93 per hour. The results of this and other data (Koestner, et al., 1984; Wehmeyer, et al., 2000) add to a growing consensus that students who act with self-determination have improved outcomes, both in and out of school.

Increasing Self-Determination for All Students

Special education is set up to support students with disabilities within general education environments to the greatest extent possible. We must also recognize, given all of the research and history referred to earlier that students with disabilities are not alone in their need to develop self-determination skills. It is therefore incumbent upon the disability research community to become more inclusive of general education students in both our research and our constructs.

Below is a framework for increasing self-determination for

all students built on disability research and findings. Increasing student self-determination begins with the synthesis of three sets of variables. The first set represents discrete student performance indicators, specific skills that students need to learn, directly or indirectly. Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, and Martin (2000), in their description of the Self-Determined Learning Model, maintain that students must be taught to: "solve a sequence of problems to construct a means-end chain - a causal sequence - that moves them from where they are (an actual state of not having their needs and interests satisfied) to where they want to be (a goal state of having those needs and interests satisfied)." (p. 442)

These performance indicators fall into three areas: (1) Setting a Learning Goal based on the student's understanding of interest, preference and needs. Goals are broad and long-term in nature. (2) Constructing a Learning Plan to "bridge the gap" between their current status and their Goal. This Plan involves student directed and initiated activities with support from others (e.g., teacher prompts). (3) Adjusting behaviors as a result of student reflection on progress towards a goal. A student may decide to change either a Goal or a Plan depending on the student's growth and continued interest. The success of any specific course of study occurs within a given set of conditions.

Two conditions, as defined by Field and Hoffman (1994), are internal to the student and "provide a foundation for acting in a self-determined manner." (p. 42) (1) Know Yourself in terms of strengths, needs, dreams, options, and what is important to you, the student. (2) Value Yourself by accepting your uniqueness, admiring your strengths, recognizing your rights and responsibilities, and practicing good self-care.

The remaining four conditions spring from Abery (1994) on the interactions between the individual and his or her environments in developing self-determination. Building on the work of Garbarino (1982), Abery recognized the complexity of the environments that students live for:

> ... facilitating the development of self-determination and encouraging its exercise in multiple settings is a complex task. This task can be affected by the personal characteristics of the individual ... and the environments in which the person functions, including the family and work/school contexts, as well as the community in which the individual resides. Therefore, in order to fully understand the self-determination construct, it is necessary that the contributions of both the individual and the environment are acknowledged..." (Abery, p. 350)

Abery categorized these environments as: (1) Microsystems, which represent the student's immediate surroundings such as school, home, and church. (2) Exosystems, the external context within which the student is imbedded (e.g., local government,

public policy). (3) Mesosystems, the impact that events from one setting or system have on another such as skills learned in school and their usefulness in employment. (4) Macrosystems, the overall patterns characteristic of a given culture (e.g., attitudes toward people who have disabilities). Wehmeyer, et al (2000) wrote:

> Promoting student self-determination is a complex process that will require a variety of educational activities across the student's educational experience. Such efforts will include active student involvement in educational planning and decision making, targeted instruction in component elements of self-determination (problem solving, goal setting, decision making, etc.) and opportunities to express preferences, make choices, and learn about individual strengths and limitations. (pp. 450-451)

The table below describes student performance indicators and supportive variables for increasing student self-determination based on the above. It represents a synthesis of considerations which a given program or community should use when designing an assessment tool or specific set of intervention to increase student self-determination.

Table 1

Indicators and Variables for Student Self-Determination

Supportive variables	The student will be able to (performance indicators):		
	1. Develop a Learning Goal.	2. Create a Learning Plan.	3. Evaluate & adjust Plans and Goals.
Student self-awareness	The student understands and and communicates preferences, strengths, support needs, and dreams.	The student knows how to create and implement plans to reach Learning Goals.	The student comprehends the results of his or her Plan, and knows how to make to make adjustments.
Student self-esteem	The student accepts personal traits and a positive future	The student obtains support from others to implement a Plan for each Goal.	The student can reward him or herself for completing all or part of a Plan.

vision.

Educational program		
The school actively supports student leadership to create Learning Goals.	The school has opportunities for students to develop Plans to reach Learning Goals.	Procedures exist within the school for student evaluation and adjustment of their Plans and Goals.
Family support		
Families are actively involved in development of student Goals.	Families are part of Plan development and implementation.	Families take an active role in the evaluation and adjustment of Plans.
Government and community		
Public resources support student choice making in Learning Goal development.	Public resources assist with the development and implementation of Plans.	Public resources allow for and support students as they adjust their Goals and Plans.
Community and School Interactions		
Community Partners work with the school toward student develop Learning Goals.	Student Plan development is enhanced through school/community collaborations.	Community Partners and school programs communicate as students adjust Goals and Plans.
Cultural Considerations		
The culture supports students as they create Learning Goals.	Local culture is considered during Plan development.	The local culture encourages student reflection and changes to Plans and Goals.

Summary

Jackson (1981) discussed a proposal made by John Locke in the seventeenth century to establish "working schools" for poor children between the ages of 3 and 14 where students would by law be compelled to engage in "spinning or knitting, or some other part of the woolen manufacture." Jackson remarked, "If Locke's proposal were put forward seriously today, it would arouse a howl of protest..." (pp. 54-55) This comment by Jackson was offered as a reflection, after he had visited a well regarded high school vocational program in a poor section of Atlanta, described by Jackson as follows.

> The program called Distributive Education is designed to prepare students for occupations such as 'warehouse workers, receiving clerks and checkers, price markers, cashiers, shipping clerks, and delivery truck drivers.' What would students do in such a program for 800 hours? Having worked at three of the occupations named, I can assert that a person working as a shipping clerk or a delivery-truck driver does not require ten hours of instruction a week for two years to prepare for these jobs. Such an expenditure of time and energy is of dubious value for both student and school...As for those vocational programs where lengthy training seemed fully justified, programs such as auto mechanics or cosmetology, I discovered that relatively few of these graduates entered the line of work they were trained in." (p. 51)

To avoid the mistakes of the past we must maintain a running dialogue, through study and reflection, with the previous educational researchers and theorists who came before us. Theories of power and our understanding of the structures of domination have led to an awareness of how education can either impede or improve the lives of all students, regardless of background. Unfortunately, that awareness has not translated, in broad strokes, into positive outcomes for many students with disadvantages, including students with disabilities.

To increase the graduation, income and postsecondary participation rates for all students, we must begin to deliberately involve students in the construction and implementation of curricula. This must occur within a meaningful and reflective process, where students develop both self-awareness and self-esteem leading to key decisions about long-term goals, and supportive plans. Finally, students must review their previous efforts (in the same way educators and policy makers must learn to do) as a way to make corrections and improve strategies. All this must be done in an environment that is inclusive and culturally sensitive, to avoid the dangers of tracking that has plagued our previous efforts.

By doing so, students will learn to become stakeholders in their educational programs. Unintended outcomes, such as minority group organizing to improve options and demands for accommodations to meet learning preferences, may occur. History teaches us that citizens who know how to organize can increase their power and their chances to improve conditions. The Rehabilitation Act-inspired principles of self-determination, combined with the best elements of the School-to-Work Improvement Act can create an inclusive, constructivistic model that will be sustainable through collaborative planning and reflection.

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