

Preface

Teachers in general and special educators at the middle and high school levels have used the *Steps to Self-Determination* curriculum since the first edition was published in 1996. This second edition keeps the lessons from the original *Steps to Self-Determination* curriculum intact. In addition, it provides many new activities and suggestions offered by educators and families who have used the curriculum in their classrooms or in counseling or training settings over the past 8 years.

Self-determination, “the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field & Hoffman, 1994, p. 164), is essential for meaningful success in educational programs, employment, and community living. There is abundant evidence that students who are involved in the planning, decision making, and implementation of their educational programs perform better than students who are not so involved (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Wehmeyer, 1992). Furthermore, typical adult role expectations include becoming increasingly self-reliant and assuming greater control over one’s destiny. Skills and knowledge that lead to greater self-determination are some of the most important functional life skills for students to acquire to be successful in the community. Studies have demonstrated that students with disabilities who scored higher on self-determination assessment instruments during their final year of high school were more successful in adult outcomes (e.g., employment, independent living) at 1 year and 3 years after graduation than were students with lower self-determination scores (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

The degree to which one is self-determined is affected by a multitude of factors, including environmental variables and attributes of the individual. This curriculum is focused on further developing an individual’s skills that lead to greater self-determination. This is not meant to negate the importance of environmental factors; instead, it is intended to focus on those aspects of self-determination that are within the student’s control. *Steps to Self-Determination* is focused on helping students gain knowledge and skills that will allow them to increase their ability to achieve their goals in environments with varying levels of receptivity to the concept of self-determination.

This instructor’s guide for the *Steps to Self-Determination* curriculum includes an introductory section and detailed lesson plans with reproducible transparency masters and thumbnails of the transparency masters and activity pages for the orientation, workshop, and 16 class sessions. Through piloting and field testing, we found two key factors that affected the success of the curriculum: (a) the degree to which teachers understood the overall curriculum scope and sequence and (b) the type of classroom climate that was established during curriculum implementation. The introduction includes information that will help teachers understand the overall goals and organization of the curriculum as well as suggestions to help them establish the classroom climate most conducive to curriculum success.

The complete kit for this latest edition of *Steps to Self-Determination* includes a video introduction to the concepts of self-determination, this manual, and a CD-ROM. The *Steps to Self-Determination* CD-ROM contains files of the reproducible materials, including a Student Activity Book that can be printed, the transparency masters