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A STUDY EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ME! LESSONS TO TEACH SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ADVOCACY TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to *ME!*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ……ix
LIST OF FIGURES ……...x
ABSTRACT ……..……xi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ……...……....1
Problem Statement ……..……1
Transition Practices ……..……...2
Self-Determination……..……4
Purpose ……..……15
Research Questions……..……..15

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ……..……16
Foundations of Self-Determination ……..……16
Definitions and Components of Self-Determination ……19
Self-Advocacy ……...……36
Ability and Disability Awareness ……..……38
Self-Awareness……..……40
Models and Lessons ……..…45

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ……60
Recruitment……61
Participant Criteria……...……..61
Recruitment Site……..……62
Recruitment Procedures……...……..63
Participant Characteristics……...……..65
Setting……..……....71
Research Design ……73
Procedures ……..……73
Baseline ……..……73
Intervention ……...…74
Dependent Measures ……..……78
Intervention ……...……79
Instructional Fidelity ……..……84
Interrater Agreement ……..……87
Social Validity ……..……88
Data Analysis ……..……89

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ……..……93
Research Question 1: Do the *ME!* lessons increase student knowledge about individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy?.....95
Research Question 2: Do the *ME!* lessons increase student expression of knowledge regarding personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy?....110
Question 3: Do students value learning about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy?.....125

Research Question 4: Do parents value their students learning about his/her disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy?.....129
Research Question 5: Do special education teachers find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical for classroom instruction? ……..…..136

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION …….……140
Study Overview……...……144
Findings and Interpretations…….....……...……...146
Curriculum Development…….……150
Researcher Reflections….....……152
Conclusion….....…….....159

REFERENCES ……...……160

APPENDICES ……184
Appendix A Sample Lesson Plan…….....……184
Appendix B Sample Knowledge Quiz…….……200
Appendix C Critical Thinking Activity…….....……202
Appendix D Self-advocacy Task Planning Worksheet…….....……204
Appendix E *ME!* Scale…….....……206
Appendix F Summary of Performance……210
Appendix G Self-Advocacy Task Teacher Rubric Worksheet 7-2……..……212
Appendix H Summary of Performance Scoring Rubric……...……215
Appendix I Student Pre Lesson Focus Group Questions…….....…218
Appendix J Student Post Lesson Focus Group Questions…….....……220
Appendix K Parent Interview Questions…….....……222
Appendix L Presentation Response Form – PowerPoint Presentation….....225
Appendix M Summary of My Performance and Goals-revised.....227

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Student Participant Characteristics…….....……66
Table 2. Parent/Guardian Participant Characteristics…….....……71
Table 3. Research Study Session Descriptions…….....……75
Table 4. Instructional Fidelity Checks…….....……86
Table 5. *ME!* Scale Items 1-14 (Yes, No, Not Sure)…….....……103
Table 6. *ME!* Scale Items 15-19 (Open Ended) ……..……106
Table 7. Summary of Performance Gain Scores……..……108
Table 8. Pre Post Summary of Performance Scores……....……110
Table 9. Critical Thinking Score Summary……..……113
Table 10. Unit 3 Critical Thinking Activity – Getting to Know My IEP……...……113
Table 11. Unit 4 Critical Thinking Activity – Learning About My Rights and Responsibilities……..…….....……115
Table 12. Unit 5 Critical Thinking Activity – Improving My Communication Skills....116
Table 13. Unit 6(a) Critical Thinking Activity – Driver's License……...……..117
Table 14. Unit 6(b) Critical Thinking Activity – Getting Yelled At…….....……118
Table 15. Unit 7 Critical Thinking Activity – Advocating For My Need After High School…….....……119
Table 16. Unit 9 Critical Thinking Activity – My Abilities and Disabilities Project…,.120
Table 17. Student Presentation Scores – PowerPoint Presentation……....……124

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Unit Knowledge Quiz Scores……97

ABSTRACT

A small–n design called the multi-element baseline design with a pre-intervention baseline and a phenomenological approach was used to examine the effectiveness of an instructional program called *ME! Lessons to Teach Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy* when used with high school students with disabilities. Six 9th grade students, one special education teacher, and six parents participated in this five-week study.

The *ME! Lessons to Teach Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy* include 10 instructional units with two to four lessons in each unit linked to the Oklahoma PASS standards. *ME!* topics include special education rights and responsibilities, IEP documents, understanding of strengths and weaknesses, accommodations, and appropriate use of self-advocacy skills. The lessons use a variety of activities including role-playing, case studies, PowerPoint presentations, teacher-directed instruction, video clips, a student research project, and student examination of their IEP documents. Students developed a portfolio while completing the lessons, which contained information needed for future self-advocacy interactions. The purpose of the *ME!* curriculum is to facilitate the teaching and learning of self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge and skills. The long-term goal of the curriculum is to develop self-aware adults who advocate for their needs in education and employment in a meaningful productive way.

Results indicate that the *ME!* lessons increased students' self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge and behaviors. Additionally, parent, student, and teacher reported that they believed the lesson content was useful and practical.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Students with disabilities experience less postschool success compared to students without disabilities. Unemployment rates of young adults with disabilities are at least 9% higher than unemployment rates of young nondisabled adults. Some youth, such as those with orthopedic impairments, experience unemployment rates as high as 73% (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). While the number of students with disabilities seeking higher education has increased over the last ten years, students with disabilities are still less likely to participate in postsecondary education compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006). Additionally, as many as 75% of students with disabilities continue to live with their parents two years after exiting high school. While this number is similar to that of youth without disabilities, as many as 95% of some youth, such as those with multiple disabilities, struggle to live independently four years after high school graduation (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine; 2005; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009).

Problem

Poor postschool outcomes for students with disabilities contributes to two significant problems. First, a lack of educational opportunities and gainful employment leads to a lack of financial independence, which then leads to a lack of independent living. This lack of independence directly impacts the quality of life people with disabilities experience as adults. Second, every student that leaves our school system without the education, opportunity and ability to live as independently as possible places an undue financial burden on society. It is a responsibility of the education system to educate all students in a manner that allows and encourages each student to become a

contributing member of society, both socially and economically, to the greatest extent possible. A crucial piece to improving outcomes for students with disabilities could be the infusion of self-determination skills in classroom curriculum and instruction.

Transition Practices

IDEA 2004 defines transition as "a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (1) is designed to be within a results oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievements of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (2) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes (i) instruction, (ii) related services, (iii) community experiences, (iv) the development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives, (v) if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provisions of a functional vocational evaluation (IDEA, 2004 (300.43)) These transition services must be implemented no later than age 16, or in some states such as Oklahoma, no later than age 14.

Transition planning for students with disabilities is a process that includes: (a) identification of post-school goals, (b) development of activities to facilitate goal attainment of students, and (c) active involvement of all team members in the process of the transition plan development (Kohler, 1998). Current literature and legislation calls for successful transitions to be gauged on the outcomes that match the students' interests and

desires, instead of simply meeting the goals listed on a transition plan (Thoma, Rogan & Baker, 2001).

The field has identified several practices as effective transition practices for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Some of those practices include (a) family involvement in transition planning (Morningstar, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 1995; Powers, Turner, Matuszewski, Wilson & Loesch, 1999) (b) student involvement in transition planning (Powers et al. 2001) (c) self-advocacy and self-determination training (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Martin, Mithaug, Cox, Peterson, Van Dycke, & Cash, 2003; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Garner & Lawrence, 2007), and (d) participation in general education curriculum (Sands, Bassett, Lehmann, & Spencer, 1998).

Greene and Kochlar-Bryant (2003) conducted a thorough review of transition literature and identified ten practices deemed "best practice" in the field of transition. Those practices include: (a) interagency collaboration, (b) interdisciplinary collaboration, (c) integrated schools, classrooms and employment, (d) functional life-skills curriculum and community based instruction, (e) social and personal skills development and training, (f) career and vocational assessment and education, (g) business and industry linkages with schools, (h) development of effective IEP planning documents and legislation requirements regarding transition, (i) student's self-determination, advocacy and input in transition planning, and (j) parent or family involvement in transition planning.

The Taxonomy for Transition Programming: A Model for Planning, Organizing, and Evaluating Transition Education Services and Programs developed by Kohler (1996) includes five domains for schools to address during the transition process of students with disabilities. The five domains include (a) family involvement; (b) program structure; (c)

interagency collaboration; (d) students development; and (e) student-focused planning. Within each domain of the taxonomy exists several sub domains that address each of the "best" and "effective" practices identified in the literature and listed above.

Self-Determination

Self-determination, a common factor across the literature of best practices and improving student outcomes, plays a crucial role in teaching students the skills they need to identify and express their needs, interests and preferences. Literature shows that an increase in self-determination positively influences the academic performance of students and independent living outcomes of adults with disabilities. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) concluded that students with higher levels of self-determination obtained higher employment rates than those who had lower levels of self-determination. Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) found that students with higher self-determination scores in secondary school fared better across multiple life outcomes, including work and school. Martin, Mithaug, Oliphint, Husch, and Frazier (2002) demonstrated that workers who completed systematic self-determined assessments to facilitate self-determined behaviors such as advocacy kept their jobs significantly longer than those who did not complete the assessment. Such results support the idea that self-determination education is a key component of successful transition from secondary to postsecondary life for students with disabilities. Self-advocacy and self-awareness are two key components of self-determination (Test, Mason, Konrad, Neale & Wood, 2004).

Self-awareness and self-advocacy are both crucial for teaching students to understand their disability and needs as well as the required skills to advocate for themselves (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998a; Lachapelle, Wehmeyer,

Haelewyck, Courbois, & Keith, et al., 2005). Self-awareness refers to a person's ability to identify his/her strengths, areas of need, likes and dislikes as well as identify how the disability impacts each of these areas of life. A key component of self-awareness is recognizing and understanding the impact of the disability without allowing it to control one's life. People with disabilities are capable of accomplishing success as much as people without disabilities accomplish. A difference is that a person with a disability may need the structure of the environment or process of something to vary from the typical structure in order to participate successfully. When this occurs a person must make the choice to advocate for accommodations in that particular environment, choose not to participate, or attempt to participate without the needed accommodations. Teaching students the knowledge and skills needed to advocate appropriately has the potential power to increase their success and participation in future employment and education environments.

During the last three decades, legislation and polices have been passed and implemented with the goal of improving education outcomes for students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), reauthorized in 2004, drew attention to the transition needs of students with disabilities. According to the IDEA, the purpose of special education is "to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living." (Section 1400(d)). Despite the focus on preparation for the future, little research exists examining the postschool outcomes of students who received self-determination instruction during high school.

Research regarding self-determination, specifically self-advocacy, typically focuses on student behaviors during IEP meetings (Mason, McGahee-Kovac & Johnson, 2004; Torgerson, Miner & Shen, 2004; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug & Martin, 2000). Examples of self-advocacy behaviors during IEP meetings include the student's ability to discuss goals and introduce people and topics at the meeting (Snyder & Shapiro, 1997). There is some evidence that students who are able to do these things are also more likely to name accommodations regarding college and ask friends or classmates for help (Merchant & Gajar, 1997).

Extensive search of the literature indicates only two longitudinal or follow-up studies examining how students who display self-determination behaviors in IEP meetings advocate for themselves in adult settings such as colleges, universities, job settings and living environments after leaving secondary school (Wagner, Blackorby & Cameto, 2004; Wagner, Marder, Blackorby, Cameto, Newman, Levine, & Davies-Mercier, 2003). No identified literature included research that followed students through their adult years after receiving specific self-advocacy instruction during high school. There is a need to conduct longitudinal research regarding self-determination education and its impact on students in postsecondary settings (Eisenman, 2001). Ultimately, one must look at literature regarding adults with disabilities in job and education settings to get an understanding of how many students with disabilities possess or lack the knowledge, ability, and skills to advocate for themselves in each of these environments after leaving high school.

Literature regarding experiences of students with disabilities at colleges and universities suggest students with disabilities experience less success compared to

students without disabilities (Gilson, Dymond, Chadsey & Hsu, 2007; Cummings, Maddux & Casey, 2000; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Employment data focusing on students with disabilities indicate that overall students with disabilities experience less job satisfaction, make less money, and experience unemployment at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers (Wagner, Marder, Blackorby, Cameto, Newman, Levine, & Davies-Mercier, 2003). Much of the literature that exists on self-advocacy ability and behavior of young adults with disabilities consists of surveys and questionnaires completed by educators regarding student behaviors in school settings.

According to the findings of a questionnaire completed by school staff, approximately 60% of students with disabilities have the ability to self-advocate "well" or "very well" (Wagner, Marder, Blackorby, Cameto, Newman, Levine, & Davies-Mercier, 2003). leaving one to assume that approximately 40% of students with disabilities lack the ability to advocate very well for themselves. Little discussion exists in the literature regarding how the students act upon the perceived ability to advocate for themselves after leaving high school. Teachers use assessments to measure behaviors and progress of students learning to become independent (Wagner, Marder, Blackorby, Cameto, Newman, Levine, & Davies-Mercier, 2003). but little to no real opportunities to practice the behaviors are provided outside of the IEP meeting. When students do attempt to self-advocate, they typically lack the necessary pre-requisite knowledge and receive little feedback from adults on their performance.

Janiga and Costenbader (2002) conducted a survey study to identify the strengths and weaknesses in transition plans to facilitate the transition of high school students with disabilities to universities and community colleges. Data for this study was collected

from coordinators of special services for students with disabilities at 174 universities and colleges across the state of New York. A total of 74 (41%) of the surveys were completed and returned. The two most common suggestions for improving transitions included increasing student's self-advocacy skills and increasing their level of understanding regarding their disability. These findings are consistent with those found by Cummings, Maddux and Casey (2000).

Gilson, Dymond, Chadsey and Hsu (2007) conducted a 35 item online survey completed by 119 college students with visual impairments from across the United States. The purpose of the survey was to understand how college students with visual impairments advocate for and obtain access to textbooks, the barriers they face doing so, and the strategies they use to overcome those barriers. According to this study, 20% of students simply do not read their textbooks when they experience challenges obtaining accessible textbooks, rather than advocating for the material they need. The researcher suggests that these findings demonstrate a lack of self-advocacy among students with visual impairments attending colleges and universities. Numerous studies exist that support the findings of these studies (Mull, Sitlington, & Alper, 2001; Pierangelo & Crane, 1997; Sarver, 2000; Stodden & Dowrick, 2000; Stodden, Jones, & Chang, 2002), illustrating the need to prepare students with disabilities to advocate for themselves when they attend colleges and universities.

Research examining self-determination, other than surveys of opinions and perceptions of adults, at the secondary level typically includes findings from single subject and small group studies examining specific self-determination interventions. Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test and Woods (2001) conducted a meta-analysis,

examining which interventions and which groups of students had been most commonly studied. The researchers identified 51 studies, nine of which were small group studies and 13 single subject studies. The remaining 29 studies included pretest Posttest design (14), five nonequivalent group comparisons, five single-subject multiple baseline designs, four reported opinions based on surveys, and four consisted of qualitative methods. These 29 studies typically lacked experimental design and failed to provide adequate description of the findings and data. According to the findings of the meta-analysis, choice making and self-advocacy are the most common components of self-determination taught and are most frequently taught to students with mild developmental disabilities or learning disabilities. The research also indicates that self-advocacy is frequently taught as part of self-determination activities, but remains one of the least studied components of self-determination interventions.

Results from Algozzine et al. (2001) indicate that while evidence exists supporting self-determination instruction, gaps in the existing research have resulted in specific areas needing attention. For example, the impact of staff training needs further examination to determine if training increases the likelihood that staff provides opportunities for students to practice self-determined behaviors in school settings. Also, of the 51 studies examined, less than 20% collected procedural reliability data and only 45% collected social validity data. Improvement in procedural reliability and social validity are crucial if we are to claim the intervention is effective and valued by the participants. Finally, identifying and studying improved outcomes for students who received self-determination interventions is crucial if we are to claim self-determination

impacts the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, education, and independent living after high school.

According to IDEA 2004, transition services must take students' preferences and interests into account. Despite this requirement, there is little research regarding the value students place on what the field deems as best practices. The literature on transition typically focuses on parent participation, the role of educators and other professionals, and opportunities for students to participate in meetings (Clark & Kolstoe, 1995: Hanley-Maxwell, Whitney-Thomas, & Pogologg, 1995: Thoma, Rogan & Baker, 2001). Two recent studies did focus exclusively on student perceptions of self-determination practices (Thoma & Getzel, 2005; Trainor, 2005).

Thoma and Getzel (2005) conducted a study to identify the skills and beliefs of college students regarding self-determination. Thirty four college students with disabilities who had disclosed their disability to the campus disability resource center participated in the qualitative study. The students ranged in age from 18 to 48 and each participated in focus groups, ranging in size from 6 to 10 participants. During the focus groups, participants identified self-determination as an important part of their postsecondary success. Participants also emphasized the importance of students understanding their disability and having the ability to explain their disability to others. While self-advocacy was not specifically discussed in the study, one can assume that most or all participants possessed some degree of self-advocacy skills because each participant had disclosed their disability and requested services from the campus disability office.

Trainor (2005) conducted a qualitative study that included 15 male students with learning disabilities ranging in age from 16 to 18. The purpose of this study was to examine the behaviors and perceptions of the participants during the transition planning process, specifically, self-determined behaviors and the student's opinions of self-determination practices. The researcher conducted in-depth document reviews, observations, and interviews with the participants. Findings of the study indicate that self-determination should be included in curricula for students with disabilities. However, researchers and educators need to consider the cultural and environmental factors such as, family, individual, school and society, when asking students to practice self-determination as each of these variables can play a significant role in the behaviors and expectations of students. The researcher also identified a lack of opportunity for students to practice self-determination skills in the school setting.

A study by Martin and El-Kazimi (unpublished manuscript) combined a delayed quasi-experimental repeated measure design study with a qualitative study. The researchers conducted the primary study to determine the effectiveness of a goal-setting curriculum called *Take Action* when used in two general education classrooms that included 104 students including general education, special education, and gifted students. At the end of the study, students were given the opportunity to answer three open-ended questions about the intervention; 82 students responded. Students typically responded positively to the curriculum and believed learning to set goals was a valuable skill for them to learn.

Based on findings of current literature, many students with disabilities lack the knowledge, skill and ability to advocate for themselves appropriately. This outcome

could be very different if we addressed the need for teaching self-awareness and self-advocacy skills while students are in the public school. Self-advocacy skills must be taught to students with disabilities if they are to attain a more satisfying life after graduation (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998; Lachapelle, Wehmeyer, Haelewyck, Courbois, & Keith, et al., 2005).

Research exists supporting the efficacy of self-advocacy, but there appears to be a lack of instruction in the classroom for students to learn self-advocacy skills, despite access to developed curricula (Fiedler & Dunneker, 2007). This lack of instruction leads to a lack of knowledge and skills for students in educational and employment settings. This results in people attempting to navigate environments and circumstances, such as work or class, without the accommodations required by their disability. Attempting to achieve success in school and work without needed accommodations often results in less success for people with disabilities compared to their non-disabled counterparts. It is crucial that students obtain an understanding of self-awareness and the ability to self-advocate before they transition from secondary settings to the adult world (Fiedler & Dunneker, 2007).

Several identified barriers to teaching self-advocacy skills (Karvnen, Test, Wood, Browder & Algozzine, 2004) include a lack of training and initiative on the part of the instructors and a lack of time during the instructional day. This lack of instruction combined with a lack of opportunity leaves students at a disadvantage for learning crucial life skills. One example to illustrate this point is the process of obtaining a driver's license. Obtaining a driver's license or permit is an aspect of becoming independent (Wagner, Marder, Blackorby, Cameto, Newman, Levine, & Davies-Mercier, 2003).

However, students with reading disabilities may require accommodations to pass the written portion of the test. Without the skills and knowledge to do so students risk failing the test and failing to get a driver's license. Failing to obtain a driver's license has the potential to narrow school, employment, and housing opportunities for an individual.

In an effort to identify and describe issues regarding the implementation of self-determination activities in schools, Eisenman and Chamberlin (2001) conducted a cluster analysis that included participant observation, interviews, networking groups and student assessments. The purpose of the study was to help bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners regarding self-determination education in schools. Participants included 200 students with and without disabilities from two vocational technical high schools, four high schools, and an alternative school. Non-student participants included nine secondary staff members, three transition systems change project staff members, a university faculty member and two research assistants, and two parents. Data was collected over a nine month period at each site across all participants. Results of the study indicate a need for students, teachers, and parents to discuss disability issues, collaboration between general and special educators, and improved documentation of the results of self-determination activities in schools. Additionally, the researchers acknowledge the value of discussing self-determination with students and the need for school staff and personnel to have a sufficient knowledge base regarding disability to engage students in such conversations.

A major focus of improving the transition process for students with disabilities includes student instruction in self-determination skills. As a result, several programs currently exist to enhance the self-determination skills of youth with disabilities (Halpern

et al., 1997; Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1996: Wehmeyer, Field, Doren Jones, & Mason, 2004). Many models, instructional materials, programs, and strategies have been developed over the past 20 years to assist educators in teaching self-determination skills to students with disabilities. Durlak, Rose, and Bursuck (1994) used a self-determination curriculum to teach students with disabilities to set, plan, practice and achieve goals. Hoffman and Field (1995) developed *Steps to Self-Determination* to teach students with disabilities to set goals, make plans to attain goals, and develop steps necessary to achieve goals. Martin et al. (2003) constructed self-determination contracts to teach students how to plan, work, self-evaluate, and adjust to achieve goals. The *ChoiceMaker* Curriculum developed by Martin, Huber Marshall, and Maxson (1993) is a three-part program that includes a goal attainment module. Existing research confirms that such programs do increase a student's self-determination (Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, & Wood, 2001; Cross, Cooke, Wood, & Test, 1999). Specifically, the instruction on the self-determination components of self-regulation and self-awareness have resulted in an increase in student knowledge and skill regarding transition planning (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Garner & Lawerence, 2007). In addition to instructional methods, there are tools such as the Arc Self-Determination Scale and the AIR Self-Determination Assessment that allow parents, educators and students to assess a student's level of self-determination. A recently developed curriculum, *ME!,* focuses on teaching students self-awareness and self-advocacy skills. The purpose of the *ME!* curriculum is to facilitate the teaching and learning of self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge and skills. The long-term goal of the curriculum is to develop self-aware adults who advocate for their needs in education and employment in a meaningful productive way.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of an instructional program called *ME!* lessons *to Teach Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy* when used with high school students with disabilities. The research questions for this study focus on student skills and behaviors, student perceptions of the curriculum, and parent perceptions of disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy education for their child. The research questions include: (1) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student knowledge about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (2) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student expression of the students knowledge about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (3) Do students value learning about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (4) Do parents value their students learning about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy?

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Foundations of Self-Determination

The construct self-determination covers a philosophical point of view that includes hard determinists such as Freud and Skinner and soft determinists such as John Locke. As the field of psychology evolved, Darwinism and Mendelian genetics influenced the idea of self-determination from a psychological view. Skinner rejected autonomy by arguing that the environment controls man. However, Skinner also stated that men create the environment (Skinner, 1971). Locke believed that cause and volition played an important role in human action. This idea of volition has played a significant role in the evolution of the current self-determination definition. Locke's idea of self-determination indicated the person as the "agent" that caused the action. Later, Wehmeyer included the idea of "agent" as a crucial element in the definition of self-determination in the field of special education (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003). Again, Bandura (2001) addressed the idea of agent or "agency" in social cognitive theory.

Bengt Nirje of Sweden originally created the term "normalization" in the 1960s while working with refugees and people with developmental disabilities. The basis of the Normalization Principle includes providing similar everyday life conditions and experiences to people with disabilities in their communities and cultures as provided to those without disabilities. The principle outlines several life conditions and patterns people with disabilities have the right to experience, including self-determination (Perrin, & Nirje, 1985)

By the late 1960s the principle of normalization had caught the attention of Wolf Wolfensberger of Syracuse University. Wolfensberger, already known for opposition to

labeling people with disabilities, played a significant role in spreading normalization across the United States (Shapiro, 1993). By 1972, Wolfensberger had introduced normalization to the United States and published a book on the principle of normalization. Over the next four decades he, continued to write numerous publications regarding the treatment of people with disabilities.

The work of Wolfensberger and Nirje served as the driving force of the idea of normalization and contributed significantly to the deinstitutionalization movement and a shift in attitude toward people with disabilities. Part of this shift included the idea that people with disabilities have a right to make their own choices in life and the opportunity to become independent. While choice and decision making varies from simple to complex, the ability and opportunity to make choices and decisions is often refereed to as self-determination (Gargiulo, 2009).

As the movement of deinstitutionalization and normalization occurred, legislation regarding the education of children with disabilities passed. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) passed and ensured a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. In 1990, P.L. 101.476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed. This act emphasized transition planning for students with disabilities, stating that transition services must align with the student's preferences, needs, and interests. Additionally, IDEA required schools to invite students to their IEP meetings. Such requirements forced the field of special education to recognize the need for students to learn specific self-determination skills in order to identify and communicate their preferences and goals. In 1992, the Rehabilitation Act Amendment (P.L. 102-569) emphasized the importance of self-determination by stating

that

> Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently, enjoy self determination, make choices, contribute to society and pursue meaningful careers, and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.

The Rehabilitation Act also requires the involvement of adults with disabilities during the development of their individualized rehabilitation plan.

The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA emphasized the importance of addressing students' needs, preferences, and interests. In 2001, the New Freedom initiative was introduced. This plan was part of an effort to ensure that people with disabilities had opportunities to make choices regarding their daily lives, learn and develop skills, and participate in meaningful productive work (Pacer, 2004). Two further reauthorizations in 2004 and 2006 continued the emphasis on student preference, needs, and interests, along with preparation for postschool settings. With each new mandate, emphasis on student involvement has increased.

A national self-determination initiative, introduced in the late 1980s by The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), forced the field to consider the implications of including self-determination in education and services for people with disabilities (Wehmeyer, Bersani, & Gagne, 2000). The initiative funded 26 model demonstration projects and five self-determination assessment projects to develop theoretical frameworks to promote self-determination (Ward & Kohler, 1996; Wehmeyer, 1998). The skills focused on in the 26 projects funded by OSEP include (a) self-

advocacy, (b) decision making, (c) goal setting, (d) use of community resources, (e) creativity, (f) self-expression, (g) assertiveness, (h) self-actualization, (i) empowerment, and (j) social independence (Ward, 2005). The development of frameworks and definitions of self-determination resulted from initiative efforts (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Martin & Marshall, 1995: Sands & Wehmeyer, 1998; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes 1998).

Definitions and Components of Self-Determination

"Self-determination is an abstract concept and not about obtaining specific outcomes…Self-determination is about empowering people with severe disabilities by providing skill instruction and opportunities to practice choice and decision making so that they themselves can obtain the outcomes they desire…Self-determination is an interplay between the individual and society." (Ward, 2005)

While Nirje did not use the specific terms identified in the field of special education, he did identify specific behaviors that represent self-determined behaviors. Those behaviors include (a) making choices, (b) asserting oneself, (c) self-management, (d) self-knowledge, (e) decision-making, (f) self-advocacy, (g) self-efficacy, (h) self-regulation, (i) autonomy, and (j) independence (Ward, 2005).

A study by Field and Hoffman (1994) involving people with disabilities, parents, service providers and educators sought to simplify the experience of self-determination and develop a model to provide guidance in the development of materials and strategies for students with disabilities. From this work, a definition of self-determination and a framework for a model of self-determination emerged. According to the findings, self-determination is "the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of

knowing and valuing oneself. It is promoted, or discouraged, by factors within the individual's control and variables that are environmental in nature." The five component model of self-determination includes: (a) knowing yourself, (b) valuing yourself, (c) planning, (d) acting, and (e) experiencing outcomes and learning. In addition, interviews with students indicated that students believe self-determination should include education on negotiating relationships and accessing support (Field & Hoffman, 1994).

ChoiceMaker, one of the 26 federally funded self-determination projects, sought to clearly define the term self-determination and develop lessons and materials to teach self-determination skills to students with disabilities (Martin & Marshall, 1995). A definition and seven self-determination concepts emerged from this project. The seven concepts include (a) self-awareness, (b) self-advocacy, (c) self-efficacy, (d) decision-making, (e) independent performance, (f) self-evaluation, and (g) adjustment. According to the study, self determination refers to people who:

> know how to choose…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 toward meeting goals, adjusting performance and creating unique approaches to solve problems. (p. 147)

In addition, the researchers defined self-determination as the pulling together of research and thoughts regarding success, self-advocacy, goal setting, problem solving, self-management, and self-efficacy (Martin & Marshall, 1995).

Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001) examined self-determination and its impact on the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. Based on the literature, the researchers

indentified four key characteristics of behaviors considered self-determined. Those characteristics include (a) behavioral autonomy, (b) self-regulated behavior, (c) psychological empowerment, and (d) self-realization. The researchers placed emphasis on the impact age, opportunity, capacity, and circumstances in each of these self-determined behaviors. During the study, 408 adults with intellectual disabilities participated in interviews and surveys. Based on the results of the findings eleven key components of self-determination emerged: (a) choice-making, (b) decision-making, (c) problem-solving, (d) goal setting and goal attainment, (e) independence, risk taking and safety, (f) self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement, (g) self-instruction skills, (h) self-advocacy and leadership skills, (i) internal locus of control, (j) outcome expectancy, (k) self-awareness and self-knowledge (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001).

Wehmeyer (1996) defines self-determination as "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference." According to Wehmeyer (1996) there are four essential characteristics of self-determination: autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment and self-realization. Mithaug challenged Wehmeyer's definition, especially the control aspect, and instead defined Self-determination as "behavior that is provoked by choice making and that leads to desired ends in life" (Mithaug, 2005). Mithaug also argues that the choices a person makes are affected greatly by the opportunities available or the opportunities a person perceives as available to them.

Another definition of self determination by Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehemeyer (1998) is:

> a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults. (p. 2)

In addition to self-determination definitions, existing models and theories from the field of special education include the (a) ecological model of self-determination, (b) self-determination as a function of self-regulation, and (c) functional theory of self-determination.

The majority of self-determination theories and definitions emphasize personal control as the primary concept (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003). According to the Ecological Model, the environment, or environmental accommodations, combined with improving competency in (a) skills, (b) knowledge and attitudes, and (c) beliefs is the preferred method to increase self-determination. Literature supports the significant role environment plays in the development of self-determination (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Little, Garner, & Lawrence, 2007). According to the Ecological Model, self-determination refers to the control an individual desires and exercises in areas of their life they value. This model assumes that all people are capable of and desire self-determination, that self-determination (a) occurs on a continuum, (b) is developed over a lifetime, and (c) is an interaction between a person and their environment (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003). The Ecological Model of Self-determination recognizes that a wide range of existing factors affect each individual's development of self-determination. While all people have potential for self-determination, environments significantly impact

the degree to which individuals become self-determined (Shogren et al., 2007). People who spend time in environments that support self-determination typically exhibit higher levels of self-determination than people who lack SD supportive environments. Investigations and knowledge specific to ecological factors and self-determination are lacking (Shogren et al., 2007).

The Tripartite Ecological Model, an extension of the Ecological Model, attempts to take into account the culture of a person and the cultural impact on personal self-determination of the person. The Tripartite Ecological Model assumes that self-determination occurs on a continuum, develops and occurs across the life span, and results from interactions between a person and their environment. Additionally, The Tripartite Ecological Model identifies three domains:(a) skills, (b) knowledge, and (c) beliefs and attitudes that are related to self-determination. The skills domain includes (a) goal setting, (b) decision making, (c) self-regulation, (d) problem-solving, (e) personal advocacy, (f) communication, (g) social, and (h) independent living. The domain of knowledge includes self-knowledge, declarative and procedural knowledge that refers to resources, rights and responsibilities, and the identification of options. (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003).

According to the Functional Theory of Self-Determination, personal characteristics and the environment contribute to improved self-determination (Shogren et al., 2007; Wehmeyer, 1999, 2007; Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003). Wehmeyer, Abery et al. (2003) stated that "The functional model proposes that self-determination is a functional characteristic of people, and that self-determined people act autonomously, are self-regulating, and self-realizing and act in a psychologically empowered manner." (p.

182). The functional theory of self-determination hypothesizes that three specific things influence the manifestation of self-determination in all individuals. Those three things include (a) capacity, (b) opportunity, and (c) supports and accommodations. Perceptions and beliefs held by individuals play a role in the opportunities and capacities for self-determination (Shogren et al., 2007).

Survival requires humans to self-regulate: the need to problem solve and reach goals drives human self-regulation (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003). According to Self-Regulation Theory, experience, cognition, behavior, and environment affect adjustment and the pursuit of goals. The combination of experience, cognition, and behavior result in environmental consequences, which then leads to adjustment (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003). Self-Regulation Theory includes four conditions: (a) people need to know what to expect as a result of a behavior, (b) people need to understand the available choices in order to choose the correct option, (c) people need to know what actions to take in a given situation, and (d) the three preceding conditions must occur together to produce the desired result (Mithaug, 1993).

The field of motivational psychology contributes substantial information regarding self-determination and factors to consider when infusing self-determination into education settings and curriculum. Popular models and theories of self-determination from motivational psychology include, but are not limited to (a) social learning theory, (b) self-determination theory, (c) model of future oriented motivation and self-regulation, and (d) self-regulation.

Numerous definitions of popular constructs exist in motivational psychology literature, just as the numerous definitions of SD exist within special education literature.

Multiple meanings of the constructs self-regulation, self-regulated learning, and metacognition exist within the field of educational psychology (Lajoie, 2008). Existing literature attempts to present an in-depth investigation of this issue along with a historical review of the existing definition of self-regulation, self-regulated learning, and metacognition (Dinsmore, Alexander, & Loughlin, 2008). It is important to operationalize the meanings of the constructs in order to assess each construct appropriately (Lajoie, 2008). The purpose of the proceeding discussion is to present constructs from the field of motivational psychology related to the construct of self-determination. The goal of this discussion is to identify and describe key constructs and their similarities across special education and motivational psychology fields in hopes of identifying and clearly describing self-determination, its key components, and the environmental factors that influence SD education and learning.

The terms self-determination, motivation, self-regulation and autonomy are some of the popular existing constructs in motivational literature related to the concept of self-determination in special education literature. Self-determination refers to the idea that people behave and make choices based on what they personally value, not external rewards or control from others (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Students with higher levels of SD tend to experience greater levels of intrinsic motivation than students with lower SD levels (Ormrod, 2008). People want to feel competent in what they do and have control over what they do. This basic need for control is often referred to as self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2000). People who perceive their actions as a result of their own desires experience high levels of self-determination while people who perceive their actions as controlled by others have low levels of self-determination

(Ormrod, 2008). Deci and Ryan have greatly advanced the psychological belief that self-determination is innate (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003).

Autonomy refers to perceiving oneself as the source of one's own behavior (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Often times, people confuse the idea of independence with autonomous behavior. In reality, autonomy and independent behavior are different. Independent refers to completing tasks with no support or influence from others. Behaving in an autonomous manner does not exclude influence from others or prevent a person from honoring others needs or wishes (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The idea of autonomy is associated with the well being of an individual and the well being of a group, it applies across cultures as all humans share the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan & Kaplan, 2003). Autonomous behavior is a result of knowing and making reflective choices based on one's strengths, interests and values (deCharms, 1968). All living things possess a degree of biological autonomy and autonomy is a function of self-regulation. Including self-regulation into the classroom is an effective method for changing the behavior of students (Ormrod, 1999).

Schunk & Zimmerman (2001) define self-regulation as "the self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into task-related academic skills" (Kindle location 122-27). Self-regulation includes planning and carrying out a plan of action (Rodin, 1982). Perseverance, adaptive behavior, and initiative each play a significant role in the self-regulation development of learners. While some definitional variation exists regarding self-regulation, most definitions are based on the idea of purposive action of the person using strategies and responses to increase their performance (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2001) and a feedback and monitoring cycle

(Zimmerman, 2000). Self-regulated behavior does not mean total independence from social influences, but instead refers to the way students experience autonomy (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2001).

Motivation refers to the direction and energy a person gives to their behavior toward a goal (Reeve, 2005). According to Fearon's dictionary (1987), motivation is what influences a person to act in a particular way. The motivation levels of students affect how well they learn, how they use existing knowledge, and their ability to generalize new knowledge and skills to other situations (Dweck, 1986). Motivation plays a significant role in a student's decision to stay in school and persevere in academics in school (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Zhang et al., 2008). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive student behaviors.

Intrinsically motivated behaviors are those that people choose to participate in because of the personal satisfaction and pleasure they get from doing so (Deci, Vallerand, Pelltier & Ryan, 1991). According to White (1959), activities and behaviors that are intrinsically motivated are the basis for development and learning. Several studies have concluded that performance, well being, and learning are positively associated with intrinsic motivation (Benware & Deci, 1984: Grolnick & Ryan, 1987: Valas & Sovik, 1993). As a result of these findings, it is clear that facilitating intrinsic motivation is a key factor regarding how to increase educational outcomes for students.

Extrinsically motivated behaviors are based on the demand or need for compliance, not autonomy. These actions are a result of control, alienation, or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The continuum developed by Ryan and Deci (2000) views extrinsic motivation as consisting of four categories based on level of autonomy and self-

determination. The four categories are: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. External regulation refers to behaviors performed to obtain rewards or avoid punishment. This type of regulation involves the least amount of autonomy and satisfaction. Introjected regulation is not autonomous or self determined as it is a result of coercion and does not involve having a true choice. This type of regulation is simply a result of a person displaying behaviors placed upon them by the pressure of others in order to meet the rules and demands of a particular environment (Deci, Vallerand et al., 1991). Many education settings facilitate externally regulated student motivation.

Internal regulation includes identified and integrated regulation. Identified regulation is self-determined because it is the result of actions or behaviors done willingly by a person for internal gratification rather than external pressure. At this point, the person values the behavior they are participating in. Integrated regulation is the most highly developed of the four types of extrinsic motivation and is fully self-determined. A person in this stage of regulation has a true sense of who they are and what they value. This stage represents the point at which a person is able to make the choice to participate in an activity because they personally value the outcome of the activity. This is different from intrinsic motivation in that intrinsic motivation focuses on the interest of an activity and internal regulation focuses on the interest of the outcome of the activity. Integrated regulation is related to psychological well-being, pro-social development, and school achievement (Ryan & Connell, 1989). Findings such as this indicate the value of creating school environments that facilitate identified and integrated regulation.

According to Social Learning Theory, observing and modeling the actions and attitudes of others play an important role in learning (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, observation and modeling are the methods by which humans learn most behavior. In the early years, social learning theory was used to modify behavior and understand aggressive behavior and psychological disorders (Bandura, 1969, 1973). The evolution of social cognitive theory since the 1980s has resulted in the addition of self-efficacy and self-regulation to social learning theory. Combining modeling, self-efficacy, and self-regulation in the learning process creates a powerful approach to teaching new skills and improving existing skills of students (Gredler, 1997).

Social learning theory uses interaction between (a) human cognition, (b) behavior, and (c) environment as means to explain behavior. People set more challenging goals and possess higher levels of commitment toward accomplishing those goals when they possess stronger levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Students with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to experience higher levels of learning and achievement, they find pleasure in activities, and therefore, invest more effort and persistence than individuals with lower levels of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy does not mean selfishness, complete independence, or a lack of responsibility to one's community (Bandura, 2001).

Bandura described self-regulation as controlling one's own behavior. The process involves three steps self-observation, judgment, and self-response. Related to these steps is the idea of self-concept and its impact on individual self-regulation. For an individual to have a healthy accurate level of self-regulation, he or she must have (a) an accurate perception of their own behavior, (b) have appropriate standards, and (c) recognize success instead of concentrating on failures. Self-observation refers to the ability to

observe one's own actions. Self-judgment occurs when the observer judges their monitored behavior in relation to their goal. Based on the judgment, the observers may reward or punish themselves, which can have a positive or negative impact on future behavior and learning (Bandura, 2001).

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) also addresses the idea of "agency" and defines it as the "capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life" (p. 1). Additionally, claiming that doing so is "the essence of humanness" (p. 1). The purposive ability to make choices, take action, and regulate those actions is the basis of "agency".

> To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence exercised, rather than residing as a discrete entity in a particular place. The core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times. (p. 2)

The theory describes agency as three types, including personal agency, proxy agency, and collective agency. Often times, people lack control over certain social conditions which prevents them from having control over their circumstances. In such cases, it may be necessary to rely on others in power positions in specific environments to provide circumstances and supports that lead to appropriate outcomes. Proxy agency refers to this forced or voluntary reliance on others for support. Even highly motivated, intelligent people experience numerous situations across a lifetime which they lack resources, time, and energy to master. As a result, all humans experience times when they

must rely on a proxy agent to assist in navigation of environments to achieve desired outcomes.

Collective agency refers to the skills, knowledge, and intention of a group as a whole. The process is similar to that of an individual but is completed by a group of individuals with similar beliefs and goals. The ideas of proxy and collective agency provide explanations and examples of how and why humans, even highly self-regulated humans, seldom if ever, serve as the sole person involved in the choice making and goal achievement process.

According to self-regulation theories, students are capable of (a) using motivational and metacognitive strategies to influence their learning, (b) create and/or select appropriate learning environments, and (c) participate in choosing the type and amount of instruction they need (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2001). Self-regulated learning proposes that student learning is affected by the (a) social environment, (b) quality of educational experiences, and (c) mental ability of the learner. Despite identification of factors that affect learning, much is unknown as to why students fail or succeed despite individual advantages or disadvantages. Self-regulated learning researchers seek to understand and explain the variation of success across students in hopes of improving educational outcomes for students. For example, Schunk and Zimmerman (2001) identified four issues related to increasing learner self-regulation: (a) identifying student motivators, (b) identifying the process by which students become self-aware, (c) physical and social environmental effects, and (d) students' ability to learn and self-regulate.

Zimmerman (1998) describes a cyclical process in which learners use (a) forethought, (b) performance, (volitional) (c) control, and (d) self-reflection to monitor

their learning. Forethought refers to students learning to set goals and utilizing models to help achieve goals. The performance control phase includes comparing one's performance to other appropriate social models and feedback on their efforts. The final phase includes learners evaluating their progress and obtaining feedback on their performance

The theories and principles of social cognitive learning provide a legitimate and developing foundation for increasing knowledge about how students learn to become self-regulated (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2001). In an effort to blend the social-cognitive view of self-regulation and future oriented view of self-regulation, Miller and Brickman (2004) presented a model of future-oriented motivation and self-regulation. According to the model, the ability to recognize value and personal connection to goals significantly affects a student's motivation and self-regulation of learning in school environments. This is especially crucial for at-risk students, as they are more likely to stay in school when they perceive a meaningful relationship between their school experiences and their future (Dunn, Chambers, & Rabren, 2004). Furthermore, students must clearly define their long term goals, which they value, in order to develop appropriate short term goals intended to facilitate long term goal achievement. As students clearly identify their goals, educators should provide appropriate educational support to increase the student's knowledge and ability to work toward the individual goals. The researchers identify knowledge acquisition and problem-solving as helpful goal achievement strategies (Miller & Brickman, 2004).

Self-determination theory (SDT) embraces the belief that personal motivation results from satisfaction of three basic psychological needs. SDT consists of four mini

theories known as Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), Organismic Integration Theory (OIR), Causality Orientations Theory, and Basic Needs Theory.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) centers on the basic psychological need of humans for autonomy/self-determination, competence, and relatedness. CET was built around the idea that existing human intrinsic motivation will sustain when circumstances are suitable and diminish when circumstances are not suitable (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to CET, students must feel self-determined and perceive tasks as useful to their competence for them to experience intrinsic motivation toward activity participation. According to SDT, specifically, the sub-theory of CET, competence involves a person's ability to perceive and understand how to produce specific and desired outcomes (Deci, Vallerand et al., 1991). Relatedness refers to a person's ability to connect with and care for other people as they interact with one another, at an individual and community level (Ryan, 1995).

The development of Organismic Integration Theory resulted from an effort to clarify the types of motivation people experience and their motivation development. Deci and Ryan (1985) found that four types of extrinsic motivation exist: integrated, identified, introjected and external, in addition to intrinsic motivation and amotivation. According the OIT, the three types of motivation exist on a continuum (Ryan & Deci 2000a). Amotivation occurs when a person lacks the intention to act. This lack of action can be a result of the person's dismissal of the possible value of the activity, feeling incompetent, or having low expectations for the outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Some researchers believe that people experience amotivation as a result of a lack of recognition between

the action and outcome relationship. Others have described this state as a form of learned helplessness (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006).

Causality Orientation Theory focuses on the social environment and its influence on motivation and behavior. OIT assumes that people possess differential styles of extrinsic motivation, which are developed over time, resulting in differential performance and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Therefore, as educators, we must recognize the importance of providing an appropriate immediate social learning environment, while understanding that each student arrives with different internal knowledge and behaviors based on prior experiences that affect student performance and outcomes. OIT identifies three specific orientations of self-determination: (a) autonomy orientation, (b) controlled orientation, and (c) impersonal orientation (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Autonomy orientation views intrinsic motivation and integrated extrinsic motivation as the result of self-regulation based on one's personal beliefs, values, and interests. Controlled orientation involves external and introjected regulation as a result of behaving in ways that one perceives necessary based on commands. The final orientation, impersonal, involves amotivation due to a lack of purpose in one's behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Basic psychological needs play a significant role in SDT. The purpose of the Basic Needs Theory is to elaborate on the relationship between basic needs and well-being and the variation of needs across age, gender, and culture. Basic Needs Theory recognizes that while variation exists, people from all ages, genders, and cultures have basic needs. Satisfaction of those basic needs contributes to the overall well-being, motivation, and performance of people. Research investigating basic needs across various cultures supports Deci and Ryan's argument that people from various cultures have needs

and their overall well-being benefits by having those needs meet (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Deci, Ryan, Gagne, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001; Ryan, Chirkov, Little, Sheldon, Timoshina, & Deci, 1999).

Self-regulation theory, self-determination learning theory, and self-determination theory are valid and interrelated and each provides explanation for differing degrees of self-determination. Combined, these theories present an understanding of differing degrees of SD across people as a result of environment and opportunities to practice SD behaviors and learn SD skills (Wehmeyer, Abery et al., 2003).

Research regarding the factors of SDT in social environments has increased our knowledge of effective environmental factors across diverse settings (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Despite this knowledge, students, especially those with disabilities, are placed in educational settings that fail to provide environments conducive with motivation or opportunities to learn self-determination skills. Students with disabilities frequently develop and exhibit low self-efficacy, external locus of control, and learned helplessness. This could result from ineffective teaching and a lack of opportunities for students to learn and practice the skills of self-determination (Schloss, Alper, & Jayne, 1993). Such behaviors could dramatically improve with the implementation of self-determination education and opportunities beginning at an early age and continuing through high school. It is crucial for educators to view self-determination as a developmental process, not as a skill set taught during high school. It is important that preservice educators receive self-determination training and gain an understanding of how to create classroom environments that facilitate the practice of self-determination for all students (Shogren et al., 2007).

Self-Advocacy

The normalization movement and idea of self-determination for people with disabilities have changed the way students with disabilities receive education in the public school systems. One of the major changes over the past three decades includes the infusion of self-determination education for students of all disability categories. Interest and awareness of self-advocacy education resulted from the focus on self-determination education for students with disabilities.

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005) identified common definitions of self-advocacy that exist across the literature between 1977 and 2002. In an article by Pennell (2001) one definition in particular, that I believe captures the essence of self-advocacy, stands out to me. According to Pennell (2001), self-advocacy refers to making choices and standing up for oneself.

> Self-advocacy focuses on the ability to stand up for oneself and to help other people with disabilities stand up for themselves by speaking up, speaking out, and speaking loud. It means having the opportunity to know your rights and responsibilities, to stand up for them, and to make choices about your own life…Self-advocacy is a process, a way of life that is an ongoing learning experience for everyone involved. It means taking risks and going after your dreams. It means making mistakes and learning from them. Self-advocacy is a revolution for change, to enable people with and without disabilities to live in harmony."

Wehmeyer & Field (2007) identified key instructional areas for increasing self-advocacy for students with disabilities. Those areas include (a) behaving assertively, (b)

public speaking skills, (c) decision making, (d) active listening, (e) leadership skills, (f) rights and responsibilities, (g) transition planning, (h) goals setting and attainment, (i) resources, and (j) communication. Other research aligns with these components, identifying the ability to (a) state one's wants and rights, (b) identify needs, and (c) obtain appropriate supports for those needs as crucial to developing an awareness of oneself (Martin & Marshall, 1996). The development of self-awareness allows one to self-advocate. Research also indicates that students with increased levels of self-determination, specifically self-advocacy, experience improved graduation rates and higher employment rates (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000).

Students with disabilities should learn necessary skills to self-advocate by age 16 (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009). Students across disability category and age can learn and benefit from self-advocacy education (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005). Learning self-advocacy skills increases personal autonomy and self-determination. Students with disabilities in particular need to obtain and practice self-advocacy skills. IEP meetings and classroom settings are examples of when and where the implementation of self-advocacy interventions and strategies for students with disabilities can occur (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Self-advocacy education is an educational need for students with disabilities (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007; Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). According to findings of a meta-analysis (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test & Woods, 2001), choice making and self-advocacy are the most common components of self-determination taught and are most frequently taught to students with mild developmental disabilities or learning disabilities. The research also indicates that self-advocacy is frequently taught as part of self-

determination activities, but remains one of the least studied components of self-determination interventions (Algozzine et al., 2001).

Much of the existing literature on self-advocacy, ability, and behavior of young adults with disabilities consists of surveys and questionnaires completed by educators regarding student behaviors in school settings. According to the findings of a questionnaire completed by school staff, approximately 60% of students with disabilities have the ability to self-advocate "well" or "very well", leaving one to assume that approximately 40% of students with disabilities lack the ability to advocate very well for themselves (Wagner, Marder et al., 2003). There is no discussion of how these students act on their perceived ability to self-advocate after leaving high school.

Ability and Disability Awareness

Disability awareness occurs on a personal level and a social level. A lack of disability awareness on the social level serves as a form of oppression of people with disabilities, which affects the education and life experiences of people from all ages with disabilities (Leicester, & Lovell, 1997). According to a qualitative study by Leicester and Lovell (1997), students with disabilities and their parents described a need for educators and health care providers to gain an awareness of disabilities in order to better serve students and families. Furthermore, participants repeatedly associated the attitudes toward disability as oppressive and a problem within the education system. Based on findings, the researchers suggest a need for the acceptance of the social model of disability in order for students with disabilities to experience improved educational experiences.

Galvin (2005) conducted a qualitative study of 92 people with disabilities from four different countries to describe life factors that impact the identity development of people with disabilities. Participants indicated that the negative attitudes of other people toward them had a significant and negative impact on their development of a positive disability identity. The constant stares, pity, and condescending looks had a larger impact on participant's self-perception than the disability itself. One participant described her personal experience: "As a fairly high functioning individual I felt like a total waste and I internalized the devalued attitude I continually encountered in others…"(p. 397). Participants described their disability as the primary point by which others identified and judged them as a person. Additional research indicates that many people with disabilities report having to outperform their non-disabled counterparts to overcome such judgment and prejudice (Leicester & Lovell, 1997). Another participant described this circumstance as leading him to feel "a real disgust for your actual condition" (p. 397). Participants described the experience of learning to accept help from others and obtaining employment as a means to gain independence and break away from the frustration and shame they felt about their disability (Galvin, 2005).

Olney and Kim (2001) conducted a qualitative study of university students with cognitive disabilities to describe how participants integrate their disability experience into their self-perception. Results indicated three phases participants experienced as they formed their identity: (a) positive self-concept development, (c) dealing with perceptions from others, and (c) understanding the impact their disability has on their life. The researcher found the three phases applied to all participants across different disability categories. Participants reported concerns about managing their disability at work,

school, social life, and its impact on their emotional stability. While many participants recognized a need to disclose their disability at school, many reported a reluctance to do so because of the stigma and shame associated with disability. A major theme from the study indicates that many of the participants needed a "grieving" time to accept that their lives might not be what they had hoped. However, going through the grief process helped participants accept and reflect on their needs and incorporate this reality into their identity.

On a social level, the media and people in general often misunderstand disability (Olney & Kim, 2001), which leads to perpetual stereotyping of people with disabilities. Educators in particular should attain an awareness of this problem and make an effort to understand the strengths of their students with disabilities and portray positive images of people with disabilities. Setting a positive example and moving beyond the disability label of students would improve the attitude toward disabilities and begin to stop the shame and fear many students with disabilities experience (Olney & Kim, 2001).

Self-Awareness

Numerous self-determination definitions exist. However, a commonality across many of the definitions is the inclusion of self-awareness, sometimes referred to as self-knowledge, self-realization, or self-concept. Self-awareness refers to a person's ability to identify and understand their (a) strengths, (b) limitations, (c) interests, (d) needs, and (e) values (Martin & Huber-Marshall, 1995; Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins & Herman, 1999). Self-awareness also refers to a person's ability to identify and describe their disability and its impact on their life. The choices a person with high self-awareness makes are

influenced by this knowledge, but the existence of their disability does not dictate the choices they make (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins & Herman, 2000).

Developing an awareness of strengths, weaknesses, needs, preferences (Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997), and persistence is a critical skill for students with disabilities (Barr, Hartman, & Spillane, 1995). One must develop a sense of self-awareness in order to become self-determined individuals (Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997). In the book *Self-Determination: Instructional and Assessment Strategies* (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007) self-awareness is defined as a student's ability to:

> possess a basic understanding of … individual strengths, abilities, limitations, and unique learning needs, and they must know how to use these unique attributes to enhance their quality of life. The development of both self-awareness and self-knowledge requires the acquisition of a categorical sense of self, which is an understanding of one's uniqueness and separateness from others (p 82).

A key component of self-awareness is recognizing and understanding the impact of the disability without allowing it to dictate one's life. Students with disabilities can usually identify their weaknesses, but not their strengths (Olney & Kim, 2001). As a result, they often develop inaccurate perceptions of themselves which affect their interactions with people and environments (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Literature on *The LD Seminar* (Sachs, Weber, &, Donnelly, 1987) indicates an increase in self-awareness among students with learning disabilities following participation in a program designed to help them understand their abilities and disabilities. The seminar is based on the premise that adolescents need to recognize their disability, learn to define the disability, and how it affects their life. By doing so, the

students are able to develop an accurate perception of their strengths, increase their self-esteem, and self-determination. Follow-up investigations four months after participation in the seminar revealed positive results for students. Many teachers reported that students who participated in the seminar began to accept personal responsibility in their learning, were more cooperative in the classroom, and displayed behaviors of learned helplessness and anger less frequently after the seminar (Sachs, Weber, &, Donnelly, 1987).

Self-definition, another word to describe the construct of self-awareness, refers to the way students (a) learn about themselves, (b) describe themselves, (c) have a vision of their future, and (d) varies from high to low. Whitney-Thomas and Moloney (2001) conducted a qualitative study investigating the self-definition of high school students with disabilities and without disabilities. Using guided interviews and observations, the researchers identified aspects of life in which students struggle. Self-definition, a major theme emerging from the study, revealed that students with disabilities typically experience lower levels of self-definition compared to their non-disabled peers. All of the participants in the study who exhibited low levels of self-definition had a disability while only a third of the students exhibiting high self-definition had a disability. Those with low levels of self-definition exhibited inaccuracies when describing themselves and frequently exhibited low levels of confidence compared to their peers with high self-definition. Students with disabilities often were unable, or chose not to describe themselves, instead stating that they wished they were different or did not know who they were. Participants in the high definition group frequently used words like “hardworking,” “independent”, and “intelligent” when describing themselves. Overall the findings indicate that participants who effectively deal with challenges in school posses high

levels of self-definition. While many adolescents struggle to accurately develop a sense of who they are, students with disabilities experience greater difficulties doing so. This places students with disabilities at a higher risk for school difficulty and underscores the importance of self-determination education for students with disabilities (Whitney-Thomas, & Moloney, 2001).

Research on people's ability to understand their disability and incorporate that understanding into their self-identity reveals that many people with disabilities frequently fail to fully incorporate knowledge about their disability into their self-identity. In a study investigating this topic, Davies and Jenkins (1997) found that failure to incorporate this knowledge might result from a lack of opportunities and relationships in typical settings. During the study, the researchers collected interview and observation data of 60 young adults with disabilities, their parents, and/or caregivers. The interviews focused on the ability of participants to define their disability and then discuss their understanding of the disability in relation to their self-identity. Participant responses fell into one of three categories. Forty-two percent of the participants were unable to provide a description of their disability or incorporate disability into their self-identity. The typical responses from the first group consisted of "don't know" and "you tell me". The second group included 30% of the participants, which were able to provide a definition of their disabilities but were unable to incorporate the disability as part of their self-identity. The remaining 28% were able to define their disability to some degree and include themselves into the description. However, nearly half (7) of the 28% provided only a partial or unclear description of their disability, making it difficult to understand the degree to which they incorporated an accurate perception of the disability into their self-identity. Overall, the

participants exhibited unfamiliarity and misunderstandings of terms used to name and describe their disabilities. This is likely the result of many adults avoiding candid conversations about disability with young people with disabilities. Many of the parents in the study reported avoiding such conversations, citing cruelty as the primary reason and feeling that their child would not understand the explanation parents provided regarding disability. A major theme emerging from the study was a need to increase self-knowledge by providing students with opportunities for relationships and conversations in typical settings. Simply telling a person they have a disability fails to teach them how to accurately incorporate that disability into their daily life (Davies, & Jenkins, 1997).

The development of self-awareness begins early in childhood and continues through adolescence. However, the development of awareness varies based on when a person acquires their disability. Typically, as time passes, people with disabilities develop strategies to positively define themselves and see the disability as a challenge, but not defining factor of their life. Some people with disabilities have described one strategy as just learning not to worry about what others think (Galvin, 2005). Environmental factors, such as learning opportunities and messages from other people, along with internal beliefs about one's self affect a person's self-awareness development (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Existing studies have identified self-awareness as a key component to teaching students with disabilities to become self-determined. Self-awareness constructs include identifying one's needs, interests, values, and identifying and understanding one's strengths and limitations (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Unfortunately, self-awareness education often centers on the ability of a person with a disability to accept their

disability instead of the ability to understand the disability and it's effects on their life (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007). Self-awareness education should focus on providing students opportunities to learn skills and use those skills in practical environments. Opportunities to practice skills, use judgment, and learn from mistakes are important for all students, including those with disabilities (Barr, Hartman, & Spillane, 1995). It is crucial that students with disabilities experience opportunities to learn self-awareness skills if they are to successfully navigate the adult world (Durlak, Rose, & Bursuck, 1994). Having opportunities to make mistakes, choices, and to interact with people across environments helps students develop a sense of self-knowledge (Whitney-Thomas, & Moloney, 2001). It is important to explicitly teach students about self-awareness (Schreiner, 2007), beginning at a young age and continuing through graduation. College age students have indicated that students with disabilities should begin self-awareness education as early as possible (Thoma & Getzel, 2005). Students must possess an accurate understanding of their disability and skills if they are to advocate for themselves appropriately (Schreiner, 2007).

Models and Lessons

The *ChoiceMaker* Curriculum developed by Martin, Huber-Marshall, and Maxson (1993) is a three-part program for teaching self-determination components. The *ChoiceMaker* curriculum emphasizes seven components: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-advocacy, (c) self-efficacy, (d) decision making, (e) independent performance, (f) self-evaluation, and (g) adjustment. The three sections making up the curriculum include *Choosing Goals, Expressing Goals,* and *Taking Action*. *Choosing Goals* focuses on teaching students how to identify preferences and needs for employment, independent

living, education, and community participation. *Expressing Goals* teaches students how to express the knowledge learned in *Choosing Goals* to facilitate IEP meeting participation. *Taking Action* teaches student goal setting and attainment skills.

During the curriculum development stage the developers of *ChoiceMaker* conducted an in-depth process to identify and operationalize self-determination concepts. Next, they conducted a social validation survey with transition experts, teachers, parents, and adults with disabilities to obtain feedback regarding the concepts and definitions and the curriculum matrix. Additionally, the developers created a criterion-referenced assessment designed specifically for use with the curriculum. *ChoiceMaker* includes lesson plans, student materials, and videos to facilitate teaching the seven identified self-determination concepts (Martin & Marshall, 1995).

Research investigating the effectiveness of *ChoiceMaker* includes a study by Cross, Cooke, Wood and Test (1999). The study compares MAPS and *ChoiceMaker* curricula in a high school classroom. The comparison consisted of 10 students with mild-moderate mental retardation, which were divided into two groups of five participants each. One group received instruction on a modified version of MAPS and one group received instruction on the *ChoiceMaker* curriculum. The modification of MAPS consisted of replacing the required support groups with student questionnaires about themselves. Measure of the dependent variable consisted of four different measurements, including the Arc Self-Determination Scale, the self-determination assessment included in *ChoiceMaker*, individual interviews, and observations of five of the 10 students' IEP meetings.

Study findings indicate that both MAPS and *ChoiceMaker* resulted in similar experiences for students. However, *ChoiceMaker* resulted in larger observable changes in student self-determination behaviors compared to the MAPS group. The student's self-ratings from the Arc's Self-Determination score and teacher ratings on the *ChoiceMaker* Self-Determination Assessment of choosing goals both illustrated significant and positive changes between the pre-test and Posttest scores. IEP meeting observations indicated limited ability by students to act on their new self-determination knowledge. This study provides evidence to support student need for self-determination education and opportunities to practice skills in authentic settings (Cross, Cooke, Wood, & Test, 1999).

Research by Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, and Wood (2001) investigated the use of a modified version of the *Self-Directed IEP* (Martin & Marshall, 1995) as a means to increase IEP meeting participation of students with moderate mental retardation. Participants consisted of four students selected from a self-contained classroom. Lessons consisted of two 30 to 40 minute sessions each week for twelve weeks and emphasized knowledge of self, communication, and leadership skills. Additionally, IEP meeting observation of all participants occurred pre and post intervention. Results indicated that IEP meeting involvement increased for all participants. Study findings support the use of self-determination curriculum as a way to increase student's self-determination skills, which could increase a student's ability and willingness to participate in IEP meetings (Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, &, Wood, 2001).

Snyder and Shapiro (1997) conducted a single subject study investigating the use of the *Self-Directed IEP* to determine effects on IEP participation for adolescents with emotional behavior disabilities. All three of the participants attended a school for students

with emotional disabilities and received the intervention during eleven 40 minute sessions and mock IEP meetings. Scores for meeting introductions, goal review, and discussion of future goals increased for two of the participants. Post intervention assessment indicated no change in overall self-determination scores for two students and a decrease in scores for the third student (Snyder & Shapiro, 1997)

Take Action, part of the *ChoiceMaker* curriculum, teaches students goal attainment skills. During the lessons, students learn how to: (a) set standards for their goal performance, (b) get feedback on their performance, (c) learn what motivates them, (d) identify strategies, (e) identify supports, and (f) schedules (Martin, Huber-Marshall, Maxson, & Hallahan, 1999).

A single subject design study examining the efficacy of the *Take Action* curriculum by German, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2000) used six adolescents with mild to moderate mental retardation to teach IEP goal attainment. Implementation occurred in the special education resource classroom two students at a time where each student received three weeks of instruction during the intervention. Dependent measures included the number of daily goals attained by participants. Results indicate increased goal-attainment performance across all six participants. Additionally, maintenance data indicated two participants continued goal attainment for at least three weeks and two participants maintained goal attainment for at least two weeks. (German, Martin, Marshall, &, Sale, 2000).

Durlak, Rose, and Bursuck (1994) used a researcher designed self-determination curriculum to teach students with disabilities to (a) set, (b) plan, (c) practice, and (d) achieve goals. Participants of the single-subject design study consisted of eight high

school students age 15 to 17 diagnosed with learning disabilities. Participants received direct instruction in self-awareness and self-advocacy skills in the special education classroom. Instruction included two 30 minute sessions per week. Findings indicated that all eight participants learned self-determination skills, but statistical analysis found no significant difference in pre and Posttest scores on self-advocacy or self-awareness.

Hoffman and Field (1995) developed *Steps to Self-Determination* to teach students with disabilities to (a) set goals, (b) make plans to attain goals, and (c) develop steps necessary to achieve goals. *Steps to Self-Determination* consists of 18 sessions that include a 55 minute orientation, a 6 hour workshop focusing specifically on self-awareness, and sixteen 55 minute sessions focusing on sic self-determination related components, (a) know yourself, (b) value yourself, (c) plan, (d) act, (e) experience outcomes, and (f) learn (Field & Hoffman, 1994). The curriculum includes scope and sequence and support at www.coe.wayne.edu/Grants/STEPS (Field & Hoffman, 2002).

Field testing of *Steps to Self-Determination* was conducted (Hoffman & Field, 1995) with 77 high school students ranging in age from 15 to 25 across disability categories. The findings indicate that all participants increased self-determination knowledge and behaviors. However, researchers failed to obtain data on participant generalization of knowledge and skills learned during the intervention (Hoffman & Field, 1995).

Take Charge for the Future, a program developed for teaching students self-determination skills, is appropriate for students with and without disabilities (Powers, 1996). During the program each student is matched with an adult mentor and taught self-determination skills on an individual level. The major components of the curriculum

include: (a) mentorship, (b) peer support, (c) parent support, and (d) skill attainment. Learners and mentors must meet once or twice weekly for six to nine months to work through the curriculum.

Field testing of *Take Charge* includes a study by Powers, Turner, Ellison, Matuszewski, Wilson, Phillips, and Rein (2001) involving 20 students from across disability categories and their parents. Students and mentors participated in weekly meetings for five months while working through the *Take Charge* curriculum. Findings indicate a significant improvement in self-determination related skills and knowledge across participants.

Another field test (Powers, Turner, Westwood, Matuszewski, Wilson, & Phillips, 2001) included 43 students ranging in age from 14 to 17 from across disability categories. Teacher nomination and parent consent determined participant inclusion. Students and mentors participated in weekly meetings over a four month period while working through the *Take Charge* curriculum. Findings indicate a significant difference in self-determination skills and knowledge across participants during and immediately following intervention. However, generalization and maintenance data were not reported.

Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, and Deshler (1994) developed the *Self-Advocacy Strategy for Education and Transition Planning (I-PLAN)* curriculum, designed to combine self-advocacy instruction with student led IEP meetings. During the curriculum, students are taught the I-PLAN strategy which is a five step process of:

1. **I**nventory your strengths, areas of needed improvements and learning needs,
2. **P**rovide your inventory information,
3. **L**isten and respond and,

4. **N**ame your goals.

Students move through seven stages beginning with IEP meeting orientation and ending with student generalization of new skills and knowledge to actual IEP meetings.

The Van Reusen and Bos (1994) study included 21 participants with learning disabilities ranging in ages from 14 to 21 to determine how the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* changed student IEP meeting participation. The control group received a lecture on IEP's with no other intervention. Results indicate a significant increase in knowledge regarding personal strengths, weaknesses, and future goals in the intervention group. Limited anecdotal information from participants indicated some students used the I-PLAN strategy beyond the scope of the intervention.

A single subject study involving 22 high school students with disabilities combined the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* and an interactive hypermedia program to teach students the curriculum content (Lancaster, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2002). Participants were divided into three groups based on intervention received. The first group received the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*, the second received the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* combined with interactive hypermedia, and the final group received no instruction regarding self-determination skills. Findings indicated that participants in both the *Self-Advocacy* group and the *Self-Advocacy* with hypermedia group generalized self-determination skills to their actual IEP meetings.

In a similar study, Hammer (2004) also investigated the use of the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* combined with hypermedia using single-subject design. Participants included three middle school age students receiving special education services. During the intervention, students participated in two or three sessions conducted on the computer

and three to seven sessions of teacher-led instruction. Results support findings by Lancaster, Schumaker, Deshler. (2002), indicating a post intervention increase in IEP meeting participation of all students using the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* combined with hypermedia.

Test and Neale (2004) conducted research on the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* using four eighth grade students with disabilities. Researchers sought to determine how curriculum use would affect the self-determination skills of participants. Specifically, they wanted to see if the intervention would increase students' verbal contribution during IEP meetings. Each participant received 10 one-on-one instructional sessions lasting approximately 20 to 45 minutes each. Participants failed to show a significant increase in self-determination, but did report feeling more prepared for their IEP meetings.

Whose Future is it Anyway?, a program developed by Wehmeyer and Lawrence (1995), focuses on increasing student participation in the transition planning process. The curriculum introduces students to transition via 36 lessons across six domains. Those domains include (a) self-awareness and disability-awareness, (b) decision making, (c) securing support of community resources, (d) evaluating goals and objectives, (e) effective communication skills, and (f) the development of leadership and self-advocacy skills. Additionally, students learn the DO IT! Process of:

1. **D**efine the problem.
2. **O**utline our options.
3. **I**dentify the outcome of each option.
4. **T**ake action. Get excited!

Field testing of *Whose Future is it Anyway?* includes a study of 53 high school students with disabilities from three different high schools. All participants received approximately one hour of instruction per week to move through the 36 sessions included in the curriculum. Pre and post intervention testing was done using the Arc's Self-Determination Scale and the Nowicki-Strickland Internal Scale (adult version) to measure locus of control. Two 10-question surveys developed by project personnel which utilized a Likert scale obtained information on self-efficacy for educational planning and outcome expectancy for educational planning. Results indicated a significant increase on self-efficacy scores and outcome expectancy. However, scores failed to show a significant increase on the self-determination or locus of control for participants (Wehmeyer & Lawrence, 1995).

The *Next S.T.E.P.: Student Transition and Educational Planning* curriculum includes lesson, materials, and accompanying videos, along with descriptions of how to include families in the transition process (Halpern et al., 1997). The 16 lessons are divided across four units: (a) getting started, (b) self-exploration and self-evaluation, (c) developing goals and activities, and (d) putting a plan into place.

Research on the *Next S.T.E.P* curriculum includes research examining the effectiveness of *Next S.T.E.P*. when taught to high school students with learning disabilities (Zhang, 2001). Participants came from six different classrooms in one high school. Three classrooms received the intervention and the other three served as the control group. Participants included 71 students who attended class in the general education classroom, but also spent time in the special education resource classroom. The intervention occurred in the special education resource classroom. Participant evaluation

included pre and Posttesting with the Arc's Self Determination Scale and a one-time demographic information sheet developed specifically for the study. Zhang's findings indicate use of the *Next S.T.E.P.* curriculum as a method for supporting and increasing student's self-determination skills. Analysis indicated a significant difference between the post scores of the control and treatment groups, with the treatment group scoring higher than the control group (Zhang, 2001).

The program *A Maze to Amaze: Transition Planning for Youth With Disabilities* includes a 22 minute video, manual, and student worksheets for the purpose of educating teachers on self-determination education and the teaching of self-determination skills to middle and high school age student with disabilities. The program emphasizes personal self-advocacy, goal setting, employment, and education (McAlnon, & Longo, 1996).

A Model Program for Encouraging Self-Determination Through Access to the Arts (Harris, 1993) is a program for high school students and was developed for Project PARTnership. The purpose of the program is to utilize art as a means to facilitate self-determination education for students with disabilities. Major emphasis of the program includes (a) self-awareness, (b) choice and decision making, (c) goal setting, (d) self-evaluation, (e) adjustment, and (f) employment. The program includes background information with guide and instructions for educators, lesson plans, and assessment tools.

The *Life Centered Career Education: Competency Units for Personal Social Skills* (Brolin, 1992) is a program developed for teaching self-determination skills to students considered at risk. The program includes (a) an overview, (b) guide, (c) teacher instructions, (d) student worksheets, (e) games, and (f) assessment tools. The lessons

address competencies directly related to self-determination, including self-awareness and self-advocacy.

Lessons for Living: A Self-Determination Curriculum for Transitional Aged Students addresses several self-determination components, including (a) self-awareness, (b) self-advocacy, (c) goal setting, and (d) self-evaluation. The curriculum was developed for high school students with and without disabilities and includes worksheets, videos, guides and an overview for teachers (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Singleton, Williams-Diehm, & Childes, 2006).

Self-Determination: The Road to Personal Freedom. Protection and Advocacy System (Martin, & Carter, 1994) is a curriculum developed for teaching students with disabilities self-determination skills. The development process of *The Road to Personal Freedom* curriculum involved the development of four core questions: (a) What self-determination terms occur frequently in the literature? (b) How do various people view the skills and characteristics of self-determination? (c) What factors influence one's perception of self-determination? and (d) Would a survey and focus group research result in similar findings for questions 1-3? Once researchers identified answers to the four questions, they identified eight self-determination skills that guided curriculum development. The curriculum includes eight units which each includes an introduction and glossary of key terms, along with other teaching materials needed for each specific unit. The units include (a) Introduction to Self-Determination: The Road to Personal Freedom, (b) Expanding Role: Practice Makes Perfect, (c) Communication: A Look At Individual Styles, (d) Facing Facts: Disabilities and Accommodations, (e) Fostering Interdependence: Family, Friends, and Support, (f) The Big R's: Rights and

Responsibilities, (g) Future Planning: Getting From Here to There, and (h) Conclusion: Celebration of Self.

In addition to the curriculum's usable format the developers included a resource for teachers to help emphasize the importance of environment during self-determination education. The support information includes teaching for varying personality types, providing experiences outside of the classroom, creating a motivational atmosphere, and numerous other suggestions (Ludi & Martin, 1995).

Teacher-developed and implemented self-determination curricula exists in the field of special education teaching and research. One example includes a qualitative study by Eisenman and Tascione (2002) who collaboratively developed and implemented a curriculum to increase self-determination in high school students. Twenty two high school students with learning disabilities participated in the curriculum during their special education English class. Assignments during the intervention met the district's general English curriculum standards and also included videos and guest speakers. The researchers focused on student perception of the curriculum, knowledge of disability, and self-awareness. Findings indicate an increase in students' knowledge regarding accommodations and transition planning (Eisenman, & Tascione, 2002).

Examples of school-developed methods for improving student self-determination exist in the special education literature. For example, The LEAD Group resulted from parent reports of students with disabilities failing to obtain accommodations and modifications from general education teachers as well as counselor reports of students with disabilities lacking disability awareness and self-awareness knowledge and skills (Pocock, Lambros, Karvonen, Test, Algozzine, Wood, & Martin, 2002). As a result of

these two issues, the school began the LEAD Group to increase self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge and skills of students with learning disabilities. Students in the LEAD Group met throughout the week to discuss disability related issues and topics, such as (a) definitions of disabilities, (b) appropriate accommodations and modifications, (c) legal rights, (d) legislation, (e) learning styles, (f) multiple intelligences, and (g) IEP meetings. Practices of the Lead Group include (a) introducing self-determination, component skills in an effective sequence, (b) maintaining a philosophy of student ownership and independence, (c) self-advocacy skill modeling, (d) opportunities for practicing self-advocacy, and (e) creating an environment supportive of self-advocacy.

While no empirical evidence is reported in the article on the LEAD Group, the researchers report changes in the school community and participants as a result of the LEAD Group development in the school. A general awareness regarding students with learning disabilities and their needs benefited other students and educators in the school community. The authors included a quote from the school district superintendent, describing the impact LEAD had on him:

> What I've gotten out of LEAD, out of the kids…is that self-examination, that self-assessment, and it's forced me at 55 years old, I'm sitting down re-looking at my strengths and weaknesses through the eyes that they look at themselves with-through tough eyes (p. 215).

Differences reported by the authors in LEAD Group participants include an increase in self-awareness, self-advocacy, leadership, and self-esteem (Pococ et al., 2002).

In addition to commercial, school-site-developed, and teacher-developed curricula several guides exist for assisting in the self-determination education of students with disabilities. For example, *Helping Students Develop Their IEPs* (McGahee-Kovac, 2002) is a guide for use by parents and educators to teach students with disabilities about IEPs. The guide provides (a) tips on teaching self-determination skills to students, (b) worksheets, and (c) an optional instructional video. The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) developed the guide as part of an effort to disseminate information on improving educational experiences for students with disabilities. NICHCY recommends using the *Helping Students Develop Their IEP* guide (McGahee-Kovac, 2002) in conjunction with *A Student's Guide to the IEP* (McGahee, Mason, Wallace, & Jones, 2001), also published by NICHCY. Both guides are accessible online for no charge at the NICHCY website.

A qualitative study involving 35 ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students with disabilities utilized the *A Student's Guide to the IEP* to determine its effect on IEP meeting involvement (Mason, McGahee-Kovac, Johnson, & Stillerman, 2002). Analysis of data indicated that students reported an increased understanding of (a) the IEP, (b) their rights and accommodations, (c) their disability, and (d) an increased ability to participate in IEP meetings.

The Teacher's Guide to the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (Wehmeyer, Agran, Palmer, Mithaug, & Blanchard, 1998) was developed to facilitate educator use of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (Wehmeyer, Agran, Palmer, Mithaug, & Blanchard, 1998). Students work through a three phase process that includes setting a goal, taking action, and adjusting.

Existing research confirms that teaching materials such as those included in this paper do increase a student's self-determination skills, including self-awareness and self-advocacy (Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, & Wood, 2001; Cross, Cooke, Wood, & Test, 1999). Instruction resulting in increased SD skills has resulted in an increase in student knowledge and skill regarding transition from school to postsecondary settings (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Garner & Lawerence, 2007). A need exists for empirical research on self-advocacy (Merchant & Gajar, 1997), including investigations of intervention effectiveness (Test, Fowler, Brewer, & Wood, 2005). Quality intervention studies should include (a) participant selection, (b) intervention description, (c) data collection and analysis, and (d) a clear description of the independent variable and its implementation (Test, Fowler, Brewer, & Wood, 2005).

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

As illustrated in chapters one and two, many students with disabilities have left and continue to leave high school lacking critical knowledge about their disability and its impact on their life. Additionally, many students lack the skills and fail to recognize the role self-advocacy plays in their life. Students who do attempt to self-advocate often do so ineffectively because of their lack of accurate knowledge regarding their abilities and disability. This lack of ability and disability awareness among young adults plays a significant role in their employment and education experiences.

Chapter two provided a brief discussion of self-determination foundations and some common self-determination definitions and components in existing literature. Several models and lessons for teaching self-determination components were also described. My goal with that chapter was to illustrate the value and need for well-developed lessons for teaching self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge and skills to students with disabilities. By well-developed, I mean that the lessons must meet the needs of students and teachers by addressing identified academic standards while providing authentic learning experiences. Students must find the lessons interesting enough to participate in, and teachers must believe the lessons are valuable enough to dedicate instructional time to lesson completion. Such lessons must be accessible for teachers, affordable, and easily modified to meet the needs of students and teachers. Without these things the lessons simply become another book, binder or folder collecting dust in a file drawer or shelf at the back of the classroom. Each of these needs was considered and addressed during the development of the *ME!* lessons.

The research questions for this study focus on student skills and behaviors, parent perception of self-awareness and self-advocacy education, and student and teacher perceptions of the *ME!* lessons. The research questions include: (a) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student knowledge about individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (b) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student expression of their knowledge regarding individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (c) Do high school students value learning about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (d) Do parents value their students learning about his/her disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? and (e) Do special education teachers find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical for classroom instruction? This chapter will attempt to clearly describe how this study was conducted and how data were obtained to answer each of the study questions.

Recruitment

One purpose of the *ME!* lessons for Teaching Self-awareness and Self-advocacy is to assist special educators teach critical transition skills to high school students with disabilities. Therefore, special education teachers and high school special education students were recruited for this study. Additionally, parents/guardians of student participants were recruited to obtain parent/guardian opinions about the knowledge and skills taught during the lessons.

Student participant criteria. To help ensure that student participants would have the ability to complete required study tasks independently or semi-independently, I chose to focus on students with mild disabilities. Students also needed to attend a special education resource room at least one period per day for the duration of this study.

Therefore, I used purposeful criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) to include student participants that were: (a) already identified as having a mild disability, (b) receiving special education services, (c) attending the special education resource room for at least one period each day, (d) were enrolled in the ninth or tenth grade during the study, and (e) had an 85% attendance record or higher for the duration of this study. I also used purposeful criterion sampling to select the special education teacher participant and the parent/guardian participants for this study.

Teacher participant criteria. To be considered as a participant, the teacher had to: (a) be a highly qualified special education teacher, (b) teach in a special education resource classroom for at least one 45 minute period each day during this study, (c) have students in the resource room meeting student participant study criteria, and (d) be willing to let me teach in his or her classroom for 18 to 24 hours across the duration of this study.

Parent/Guardian participant criteria. Potential parent/guardian participants had to have a child participating in the study, and serve as the primary caregiver for the child participant. Additionally, parent/guardian participants were invited to participate in a one-on-one interview with me, the researcher.

Recruitment site. This study took place in a special education English resource classroom at a semi-rural high school located in Central Oklahoma. The high school served approximately 1,100 students between ninth and twelfth grades. Of those 1,100 students, 77% are Caucasian, 7% are black, 2% are Asian, 3% Hispanic and 10% Native American. Thirteen percent of the high school students received special education

services. The school had a four-year dropout rate of 14% and approximately 33% of the high school students attend a career tech program their last two years of high school.

Recruitment procedures. The recruitment procedures for this study required three phases of recruitment. Phase 1 included identifying a classroom teacher who met criteria for the study. Phase 2 included recruiting parents of the potential student participants. Phase 3 included recruiting student participants in the special education teacher participant's classroom. Prior to beginning recruitment procedures, I approached the principal of a local high school to request permission to recruit special education teachers in the high school. He gave me permission to contact the teachers and agreed to provide access to the high school as needed for the duration of this study.

Teacher recruitment. I initially contacted a special education teacher via phone and in person who taught 11th and 12th grade English in a resource classroom for two periods per day and co-taught in a general education English classroom for one period per day. She was interested in participating, but we were unable to work out a schedule due to end of instruction (EOI) exams for the 11th graders and alternate schedule for the 12th graders during the last three weeks of the school year.

I contacted the second teacher, Ms. Dynamite, via e-mail and in person. She taught ninth and tenth grade English in a special education resource room for two periods per day, and co-taught in a tenth grade general education English classroom for one period each day. Working together, we determined that this study was appropriate for her, her students, and their schedules. After this was determined, we sat down together to review the approved IRB procedures and consent forms. Those forms included a consent form for the special education teacher, parent/guardian permission for students to

participate, student consent to participate, parent consent to participate in the interview, general education teachers consent, and a letter explaining the study to parents. Once all IRB approved forms were reviewed, the special education teacher signed her consent form, which I placed in a study folder. Next, we went over the content and procedures of the *ME!* lessons and units and I gave Ms. Dynamite a hard copy of the curriculum to keep. We then determined the students and class period that would be most appropriate for the study.

Parents/Guardians. Each of the eight students in Ms. Dynamite's third period class were given a letter by the teacher describing the study, parent consent form for student to participate in the study and a parent/guardian consent form to participate in the parent/guardian interview. Students were instructed to place all documents in a provided envelope to be delivered to their parent/guardian and then returned to Ms. Dynamite. Of the six possible student participants, all returned the necessary consent for student participation, and four returned a signed parent/guardian consent for participation in the interview.

Students. On April 19, the Monday following my meeting with Ms. Dynamite, I attended her third period class to introduce myself, describe the study and the necessary IRB approved consent forms. The class consisted of eight students. Six students were ninth graders and attending Ms. Dynamite's class for English, one student was in the twelfth grade and attending the class as part of the Students Assisting Students program (SAS), and one tenth grade student who was enrolled in a different English class, but completed his work in Ms. Dynamite's classroom. Together, Ms. Dynamite and I determined that all eight students in the classroom would be suitable for participation in

this study, but only the six ninth grade students would be considered study participants. However, to prevent stigmatizing any student, all students were included in the consent process. Students were given one week to return the necessary IRB forms.

Participant Characteristics

Upon recruitment completion, I had a total of 13 participants, which included one special education teacher, six student participants, and six parents/guardians, four of which had agreed to participate in the parent/guardian interview.

Students. The six student participants included four males and two females who were all age 15 at the beginning of this study. The six student participants attended Ms. Dynamite's third period resource special education classroom for English nine and were receiving special education services due to a previous diagnosis of a mild disability. Table 1 summarizes student participant characteristics. Each student chose the pseudonym they wished to be identified by during the study.

Table 1

Student Participant Characteristics

Name	Age	Gender	Grade	Disability	As Identified on IEP					
					Strengths	Needs	*Special Factors	Percent of time in educational setting		Resource Room
								Sped	Gen Ed	
Butters	15	M	9	LD	Behavior, hard worker, listening comprehension, oral expression	Math, written expression, reading	None	25	75	Math English
Elmo	15	F	9	LD	Pleasant, cooperative, attitude, oral expression	Math, written expression, Reading	None	25	75	Math English
Jesus	15	M	9	EBD	Oral language, listening comprehension	Calculation skills	None	25	75	Math English
Kyle	15	M	9	ASD	Attitude, parental support, spelling, willingness to learn, great imagination, good memory	Written expression, mathematics, transportation, speech	Communication	50	50	Math English Science History
Rufus	15	M	9	LD	Spatial thinking, auditory processing, attitude, attendance	Math, written expression, reading	None	25	75	Math English
Tisa	15	F	9	LD	Oral language, social skills, attitude, parental support, attendance	Written expression, reading comprehension, math	None	25	75	Math English

**Note.* Special Factors refers to factors the IEP team considered to be relevant to this student. Special Factors included positive behavior interventions, language needs for students with limited English proficiency, Braille, communication needs, and assistive technology.

Butters. Butters, a 15-year-old male, was diagnosed as having a learning disability (LD) during elementary school, and spent one period per day in the special education resource room during this study. He struggled with math, written expression, and reading. However, he worked very hard to do well academically and earned good grades in his classes as a result of his hard work and positive attitude. Butters was well-liked by his peers and teachers who described him as a pleasant hard-working student. Two of Butters greatest strengths while at school were his success on the tennis team and his ability to make friends and get along well with others. Butters lived with his maternal grandmother in a two-bedroom apartment located in town near his high school. When he was a child Butters lived with his mother and stepfather and half-brother; his biological father does not play an active role in his life. During elementary school, Butter's mother became ill and passed away. After her death, he lived with his stepfather and half-brother and eventually a stepmother. Butters made the choice to go live with his grandmother during middle school and lived with her during the study. He sees his half-brother regularly and often sees his stepfather, who both resided in the same community.

Butters' grandmother provided a very stable loving home for him. After high school graduation, Butters plans to attend a small local four-year college. His grandmother is very supportive of his postsecondary education plans.

Elmo. Elmo, a 15-year-old female student in the ninth grade, received special education services due to a diagnosis of LD. She was a pleasant student with strong oral expression skills, but struggled with reading, writing and math. While Elmo recognizes that school is difficult for her, she wants to attend college in Texas upon her high school graduation.

During the study, Elmo lived with her aunt, uncle, and cousin. Her home life appeared to be stable and supportive. However, as a young child, her life was less stable, and she did not attend school until the fourth grade. As a result of her struggles with LD, Elmo often expressed feeling like other students saw her as "mental," and she often exhibited low motivation for completing classroom assignments. Despite her low academic skills, Elmo always verbally participated during study activities and frequently contributed ideas and questions that clearly illustrated her desire to do well. She had also clearly spent a significant amount of time thinking about her future.

Jesus. Jesus, a 15-year-old male, was receiving special education services as a result of being labeled as having an emotional behavior disorder (EBD) during elementary school. Despite the stigma often times associated with the EBD label, Jesus was an extremely likable student with a good sense of humor. His greatest academic challenge was math, but he had strong oral language skills and comprehension abilities. While Jesus experienced some behavior problems at school during his younger years, he had greatly reduced the number of problem behaviors he had as a high school student. While he was argumentative with other students at times during the study, he usually appeared to get along well with most students as well as teachers and, as a result, had many friends. During the study, I always found Jesus to be in a good mood and he contributed to the class discussions.

Kyle. Kyle, a 15-year-old student, was diagnosed with autism prior to beginning elementary school. Academically, Kyle struggled with math and written expression and was easily distracted, which caused him to get off task frequently. Kyle also struggled with communication, which often made it difficult for him to interact with and be

included by his peers. During the six-week span of this study, Kyle frequently told me he was often lonely and felt left out because he did not have a girlfriend. While interacting with peers was difficult for Kyle, he was well liked by teachers and other adults in his life who often used "terrific student," "wonderful attitude," and "very likable" when describing Kyle. Outside of school, he had a stable, supportive life. He lived with his mom and sister and was close to his maternal grandparents who live nearby. Kyle's grandfather was a very significant and supportive figure in Kyle's life.

Rufus. Rufus, a 15-year-old male, was classified as having an LD. He had difficulty with math, written expression, and reading. Rufus had a good attitude in class, but struggled to stay on task. Despite being easily distracted, he usually completed all study tasks on time. He was well liked by teachers and students at school. Rufus had a history of changing schools frequently, but had spent the majority of his school years in the district where this study took place. He recently returned to the study site high school after a short stint in a high school approximately 55 miles away.

Rufus lived with Letha, the mother of his ex-stepfather, who he considered to be his grandmother. Rufus chose to move in with Letha about a year ago when his mother and stepfather moved to a different town. While it was typically Rufus and his grandmother living in the home, Letha also had a son who Rufus called uncle and who frequently visited the home. Unfortunately, Rufus's relationship with his uncle was often antagonistic. Rufus had an older brother who the family described as having autism and schizophrenia. His brother did not reside in the home and only saw Rufus occasionally. Outside of school, Rufus works hard to take care of himself physically. He worked out regularly at home and tried to eat a healthy diet. Despite his difficulty with academics and

challenges in his personal life, Rufus was an especially likable student who had maintained a good attitude and, as a result, made many positive contributions during this study.

Tisa. Tisa, a 15-year-old female student, was diagnosed as having a learning disability during elementary school. Her greatest academic challenges included written expression, reading comprehension, and math. She was a very social person and had many friends at school. At times, her need to constantly talk with others interfered with her and other students' ability to work on study activities. However, her ability to speak out also contributed a great deal to the discussion activities during this study.

Tisa lived at home with her biological mom and dad and appeared to have a loving, stable life outside of school. While she earned passing grades and had many friends, Tisa was very aware of the fact that she learned differently from her peers.

Parent/guardian participants. The parent/guardian participants involved in this study included three mothers, one aunt, and two grandmothers. Table 2. summarizes parent/guardian participant information and their connection to the student participants. Of the six parent or guardian participants, four consented to an interview.

Table 2

Parent/Guardian Participant Characteristics

Student Name	Parent/Guardian Name	Relationship to Child	Consent for Parent/Guardian Interview
Butters	Ilene	Grandmother	Y
Elmo	Judy	Aunt	N
Jesus	Kay	Mother	Y
Kyle	Mindy	Mother	Y
Rufus	Letha	Grandmother	Y
TIsa	Linda	Mother	N

Special education teacher participant. The special education teacher, Ms. Dynamite, earned a bachelor's degree in special education, a master's degree in education, and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). Ms. Dynamite had taught special education for nine years. She taught ninth and 10th grade English in the special education resource room, and as a co-teacher in the general education English classroom. She also coached the girl's volleyball team at the high school and was active in the community. Ms. Dynamite had a well-managed classroom and had high expectations for all of her students. She was liked by her special education students as well as many other students and teachers in the building.

Setting

High school. This study took place at a semi-rural high school located in a southwestern state. While the high school served ninth through 12th grade students, the ninth graders spent much of the school day in the Freshman Academy, which was a

separate building located behind the main high school building. The Freshman Academy consisted of classrooms, a common area, and an administrative office with a principal and assistant principal that oversaw the ninth grade students. Freshman students attended some classes in the main high school building, but the majority of their academic classes took place in the Freshman Academy. The high school, including the Freshman Academy, operated on a block schedule that consisted of four 85-minute class periods and two staggered lunch periods each day.

Classroom. This study took place during third period in a special education classroom located in the Freshman Academy section of the high school. The 85-minute class period begun each day at 11:17 and ended at 12:42, at which time the student participants were released for lunch. The Freshman Academy was built approximately three years prior to the study. Therefore, the classrooms in the Academy were new and include up-to-date technology and furnishings. The study site classroom was very organized, clean and decorated in a very welcoming manner. In addition to the teacher's desk, there were 10 individual student desks, a large table with four chairs, a reading corner with a couch, and a table with two computers at the back of the classroom. The classroom also had a built-in ceiling projector and screen to use with a computer, which allowed me to use PowerPoint presentations during the study. The classroom furnishings and arrangement made it easy to plan and carry out study activities, which included lecture, discussion, group work, working in pairs, and independent pencil-paper assignments.

Research Design

Baer, Wolf and Risley (1987) indicated that a good design does not need to be "imitated from a text book" (p. 319), but needs to answer the research question convincingly. To do this, I chose a mixed method approach because I believe that by combining approaches I was able to provide a more detailed description of the participants' study experience and then compare that description with the quantitative data. I used a small–n design called the multi-element baseline design with a pre-intervention baseline (Hains & Baer, 1989) to address research questions one and two, and a phenomenological approach to answer questions three, four and five. Having both quantitative and qualitative data allowed me to provide meaningful answers for all five of my research study questions, while also giving voice to the participants who represented the people this study is ultimately meant to benefit most.

Baseline and Intervention Procedures

The multi-element design allowed me to promptly assess each unit as an individual intervention while advancing through the 10 units of the curriculum at a quick pace. The baseline allowed pre-intervention assessment of knowledge and provided an additional means to assess experimental control.

Baseline procedures. During baseline, each student participant completed a knowledge quiz for units one, two, three, and seven, a Summary of Performance (SOP) document, and the *ME!* Scale. Students completed the *ME!* Scale during session 1. Students completed knowledge quiz 1 and 2 during session 2 and knowledge quiz 3 and 7 during session 3. Each student completed the pre SOP during session 3. By the end of

session 3 all knowledge quiz baseline data had been collected and all pre SOP and *ME!* Scale documents had been completed.

Intervention procedures. Upon completion of baseline data collection, I began implementing the *ME!* lessons and collecting data using five permanent products from the *ME!* lessons. I taught the lessons to all students attending Ms. Dynamite's third period class. The instructional procedures I used while teaching the *ME!* lessons consisted of verbal and visual prompts to students to complete tasks, positive feedback for completion of activities, and verbal error correction. The delivery of these procedures was individualized based on students' needs and activities for any given lesson.

Each instructional session was unique in that it was driven by the amount of daily class time dedicated to the study activities and intervention content previously covered. However, the lesson plans included in the *ME!* curriculum each contained a lesson opening that included a brief review of the previous lesson, and specific procedures for teaching lesson content. Therefore, the lesson sessions were consistent in that they each followed a format prescribed by the lesson plan. See Appendix A for sample a lesson plan from the *ME!* lessons. Table 3 provides a summary of each session by length of session, content taught, and data collection instruments used during each session. Baseline data collection continued and was completed during session 3, at which time, lesson instruction began. Each lesson was taught according to the procedures outlined in the lesson plans included in the *ME!* lessons and materials.

Table 3

Research Study Session Descriptions

Week	Day	Session	Minutes	Session Units, Lessons and Activities	DM collected
1	Mon	1	45	– Student and researcher introductions – Research Study Description – IRB approved Consent forms were described and discussed – Student Q&A about study participation and forms – Students signed the IRB approved assent forms – Students completed the *ME!* Scale – Students placed IRB approved forms in an envelope to take home to parent/guardian. Those forms included: Letter to Parents Parent Consent for Student to Participate Parent as Participant Consent	ME! Scale
	Tue			No Session – Ms. Dynamite gave verbal reminder to students to return signed consent forms	
	Wed			No Session – Ms. Dynamite gave verbal reminder to students to return signed consent forms	
	Thur			No Session – Ms. Dynamite gave verbal reminder to students to return signed consent forms	
	Fri			No Session – All six 9th grade students had returned consent forms with necessary signatures	YOU! Scale
2	Mon	2	60	– Students completed Pretest 1 & 2 (baseline) – Pre Student focus group interview – Each student assembled his/her *ME!* Book	PS/KQ 1 (baseline) PS/KQ 2 (baseline)
	Tue	3	60	– Students completed Pretest 3 and 7 (baseline) – Students completed S.O.P (baseline) – 1:1 Understanding SA and SA	PS/KQ 3 (baseline) PS/KQ 7 (baseline) S.O.P
	Wed	4	60	– 1:2 Understanding What It's All About – Students completed Posttest for Unit 1	PS/KQ1

	Thur	5	60	– Students completed pre-test for Unit 2 – 2:1 Learning About the History of Disability	PR/KQ2
	Fri	6	60	– 2:2 How & Why Did I Get Here? – 2:3 Creating My History *introduced*	
3	Mon	7	60	– Paint Activity (Not part of the *ME!* lessons) – 2:3 Creating My History *completed*	PS/KQ2
	Tue	8	90	EOI Testing 3rd period lasted 170 minutes – Students completed pre-test for Unit 4 – 4:1 Getting To Know My IEP – 4:2 Still Getting To Know My IEP – Students completed Posttest for Unit 4 – Introduced Survival Guide Book	PR/KQ 4 PS/KQ 4
	Wed			No Session - End of Instruction Exams (EOI)	
	Thur	9	120	– EOI Testing 3rd period lasted 170 minutes – Students completed pre-test for Unit 5 – 5:1 Learning About My Rights and Responsibilities in High School – 5:2 Learning About My Rights and Responsibilities After High School	PR/KQ 5
	Fri			No Session - Field Trip	
4	Mon	10	60	– 5:3 Where do I go from here? – Students completed Posttest for Unit 5	PS/KQ 5
	Tue			– No Session - End of Instruction Exams (EOI) / Tornado Day	
	Wed			– No Session - End of Instruction Exams	
	Thur	11	60	– Students completed pre-test for Unit 6 – 6:1 Learning How to Communicate Effectively	PR/KQ 6
	Fri	12	45	– 6:2 Knowing What to Share and Who to Share it With – Students completed Posttest for Unit 6	PS/KQ 6
5	Mon			No Session - Writing Session with Ms. Dynamite	
	Tue	13	60	– Students completed pre-test for Unit 7 – 7:1 – 7:2 – Complete as role play	PR/KQ 7

	Wed	14	85	– Students completed Posttest for Unit 7 – Students completed pre-test for Unit 8 – 8:1 Using My New Skills on The Job – 8:2 Using My New Skills at Postsecondary Settings	PS/KQ 7 PR/KQ 8
	Thur	15	85	– 8:3 Reporting My Findings – Students completed Posttest for Unit 8 – Students completed pre-test for Unit 3 – 3:1 Starting My Disability Awareness Project	PS/KQ 8 PR/KQ 3
	Fri	16	85	– 3:2 Continuing My Disability Awareness Project – 3:3 Completing My Disability Awareness Project	
6	Mon	17	85	– Each student presented a Power Point of the project completed during Unit 3 – Students completed Posttest for Unit 3 – Students completed pre-test for Unit 9 – 9:1 Completing My Summary of Performance	PS/KQ 3 PR/KQ 9
	Tue	18	85	– Students completed Posttest for Unit 9 – 10:1 Planning For My Future – 10: 2 Assessing My Progress	PS/KQ 9 ME! Scale
	Wed	19	85	Last Day of School – Final Exam-Comprehensive test of the *ME!* lessons – Post Student focus group interview	
	Thur			Teacher Record Day	
	Fri				
Total		19	1350		

Dependent Measures

I used five permanent products of the *ME!* lessons as dependent measures: (a) percent of correct responses on unit knowledge quizzes 1-9, (b) number of identified problems and solutions on critical thinking activities for units 3-8, (c) scores from self-advocacy tasks, (d) scores of the *ME!* Scales, and (e) percentage of Summary of Performance items completed correctly.

Knowledge quizzes. All 10 units had a knowledge quiz that included at least five questions consisting of multiple-choice, true/false and short answer problems covering unit content. Each student completed the knowledge quiz independently prior to unit instruction and again upon unit completion for units 1-9. A comprehensive Unit 10 knowledge quiz included 39 items, matching, true and false, multiple-choice, short answer, and an essay applying learned information to a real life scenario. All students completed the unit 10 knowledge quiz after all lessons were completed. Knowledge quizzes were graded and returned at the completion of each unit. At that time, all students were provided time and opportunity for questions and discussion as needed. See a sample knowledge quiz in Appendix B.

Critical thinking activities. Units 3-8 each include a critical thinking activity (see Appendices C). At the beginning of the units, prior to content instruction, students were presented with the real life scenario directly related to the material to be covered in the unit. Students worked as a group to identify key problem(s) in the scenario, then as a group they described solutions to the identified problem(s). After completion of the unit, students were given the same scenario and they evaluated their original responses and identified additional problems and solutions as needed. Pre and post scores regarding the

number of problems and appropriate solutions identified were collected on the critical thinking activities for units 3-8.

Self-advocacy tasks. The self-advocacy task required students to approach a classroom teacher to request appropriate accommodations on an assignment or test. Students performed this during unit 7 of the intervention. See Appendix D for the self-advocacy task planning worksheet. Due to time and scheduling conflicts during this study, each student completed the self-advocacy tasks as a role-play in the special education classroom instead of approaching a general education classroom teacher.

***ME!* Scale.** The *ME!* Scale was completed by each student (see appendix E). The scale included 14 multiple-choice questions and 5 open-ended items. The multiple-choice questions on the *ME!* Scale asked students about special education and disabilities. Each question was answered using (a) yes, (b) I think, (c) not sure, or (d) no. The open-ended questions asked students to identify their strengths, areas they needed help with, and something important in their life.

Summary of performance. Prior to the intervention, all students completed the Summary of Performance (SOP) (see appendix F), which included four brief sections regarding education, living, and employment goals and the student's perception of his/her disability. Students completed the summary of performance as part of an activity in unit nine.

Intervention

The intervention used in this study was a recently developed instructional program called *ME! Lessons to Teach Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy* (Cantley, Little, & Martin, 2010), designed to teach students self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge

and skills. The program included 10 units, each containing 2-4 lessons. Each lesson took approximately 45 minutes to teach, for a total of approximately 18 hours of class time to teach the entire set of lessons. The 10 units in the *ME!* lessons included: (a) Getting Started, (b) Learning About Special Education, (c) Understanding My Disability, (d) Understanding My Individualized Education Program, (e) Understanding My Rights and Responsibilities, (f) Communicating About My Disability and Needs, (g) Advocating For My Needs in High School, (h) Discussing and Disclosing My Disability Outside of School, (i) Developing My Resources, and (j) Putting It All Together.

Lesson assignments included knowledge quizzes, various discussion and group activities, development of a student portfolio, worksheets, the use of a personal KWL chart, self-advocacy tasks, completion of a research project, completion of a Summary of Performance, and evaluation scales completed by students and parents. All units included reviewing and revising personal KWL charts, unit knowledge quizzes, and units 3-8 each included critical thinking activities. During unit one, all students organized a three ring binder into sections and created a personalized cover, this became the student's *ME!* Book. As students completed various activities and collected personal documents during the *ME!* units those documents were placed in the *ME!* Book. At the completion of all ten units, each student had a well-developed portfolio including valuable resources for use during and after high school.

Unit 1. The two lessons included in unit one provided an introduction to the concepts of self-awareness and self-advocacy. During lesson one, students learned about the meaning of self-advocacy and self-awareness via two case studies of high school students. Following group discussion, students completed a worksheet that required each

of them to describe the terms in writing and identify the significance of self-awareness and self-advocacy as related to their life. Students each completed the *ME!* Scale. During lesson two, students examined the responses on the *ME!* Scale. Based on that information students brainstormed ways to work independently or with family, friends, and educators to improve those low scores, and continue doing the high rated items.

Unit 2. Unit two included three lessons. The first provided students a brief history about disabilities through lecture, PowerPoint presentation, class discussion and an option of six short video clips. Students were briefly introduced to legislation that affects people with disabilities. The second lesson required students to work in groups to create a flow chart, that included the steps schools follow for placing a child in special education. Students also learned some of the most common acronyms used in special education during lesson two. The final lesson of unit two required each student to create a history of their educational experiences. Each student was provided with 11 guiding questions to help organize important information included in their history. Each student chose the format to tell his/her history (e.g. poem, song, collage, picture, poster, etc).

Unit 3. The third unit of *ME!* included four lessons dedicated to students starting, working, and completing a research project about their disability. During the first lesson, students briefly reviewed the steps in the writing process and developed a class timeline for the completion of the research projects. Each student was given guides to help him/her develop a report outline and organize the resources needed for project completion. Once information was written into the graphic organizers, students converted it into an essay, Power Point presentation, or brochure, depending on need of students and teacher.

Unit 4. During unit four, students learned about their IEP document. The two lessons were dedicated to familiarizing students with their personal IEP through the use of a guiding worksheet and class discussion. Students learned key terms and definitions, and concepts included on the forms. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss items and terms as needed. At the completion of unit four, each student has a copy of his/her IEP and the guiding worksheet explaining the components of the document.

Unit 5. The fifth unit includes three lessons. The first is a lesson that teachers students about their rights and responsibilities during high school. During this lesson students participated in a group critical thinking activity, learned key legal terminology, and identified examples of rights and responsibilities via class discussion. Lesson two continued the rights and responsibilities discussion, but covered it from a postsecondary perspective. During the second lesson, students learned about and discussed ADA and section 504 and identified similarities and differences between their rights and responsibilities in high school compared to postsecondary school settings. Once the legal information had been covered, students each completed a written document describing their education, employment, and independent living plans for the future. As part of their written plan, each student identified his/her rights, responsibilities, accommodations, concerns and things he/she felt good about for the future.

Unit 6. Unit six included two lessons dedicated to reviewing basic communication skills with students. Lesson one covered the use of appropriate body language and taught students a strategy to facilitate the use of appropriate body language while communicating with others. Lesson two required students to make a brief

presentation to the class while using appropriate communication skills. All students assessed the presentations of their peers using an evaluation form. Students then used a similar form to complete a self-assessment of their presentation.

Unit 7. Unit seven required students to take the knowledge they learned about their disability and communication and apply it to a real life situation. During lesson one, each student identified a class where they need accommodations for an assignment and/or exam. Students used a guiding worksheet (Appendix D) to plan a meeting requesting appropriate accommodations and explained why they are necessary. Ideally, after the meeting the teacher would score the student's progress using a rubric (see Appendix G). During lesson two, each student role-played their meeting experience in front of the class and received peer feedback. The class brainstormed and worked together to help one another learn ways to improve their performance for future situations that will require them to self-advocate.

Unit 8. The three lessons in unit eight taught students how to apply their advocating skills to postsecondary settings. During the first lesson, students reviewed ADA and section 504 and identified ways the two laws applied to a case study presented by the teacher. Students then identified their desired postsecondary setting (education or work) and researched the process of obtaining accommodations in that setting. Each student created an informational page outlining what he/she learned about their chosen setting. A copy of the informational page was made for each student to keep as a resource. During lesson three, students also organized the information learned during lessons one and two and described how they might use the information after high school graduation.

Unit 9. The ninth unit consisted of one lesson requiring each student to complete the Summary of Performance (SOP). Each student worked independently or in small groups to complete their SOP. Each student was encouraged to use the resources from units 1-8 to complete the SOP accurately.

Unit 10. The final unit included two lessons. The first lesson used a guiding worksheet to assist students in organizing their portfolio, called the *ME!* Book. Students used the guiding worksheet to ensure that he/she had included all of the resources created and collected over the course of the first nine units. Once students had organized their *ME!* Book, they each completed the *ME!* Scale for a second time. During lesson two, students compared the completed *ME!* Scales to the results to those from their initial scale completed during unit 1. Students then identified and discussed the differences in the results of scores across.

Permanent products. The *ME!* lessons included five specific assessments to measure student knowledge and behaviors regarding self-advocacy and self-awareness. The assessments included Knowledge quizzes, Critical thinking activities, Self-advocacy tasks, *ME!* Scales, and the Summary of Performance. Each of these assessments provided ways of recording and monitoring student growth in the content taught in the *ME!* lessons. In addition, students completed a variety of activities that included lectures, group discussion, individual tasks, group tasks, paper-pencil tasks, and performance assessments.

Instructional Fidelity

Two measures of instructional fidelity were calculated during this study. First, the percent of instructional fidelity observed by Ms. Dynamite, the classroom teacher and as

I taught each lesson, I self-evaluated my instruction. I then used that information to calculate the percent of instructional fidelity. The special education classroom teacher, Ms. Dynamite, observed instruction and independently recorded observation results for 7 (30%) of the 23 lessons. I self-evaluated instructional fidelity after each lesson by assessing a checklist I completed during lesson instruction. Both Ms. Dynamite and I used the lesson plans included with the *ME!* lessons as a checklist for each instructional fidelity check we completed. Instructional fidelity checks for the seven lessons Ms. Dynamite and I evaluated, resulted in 100% agreement across both of our ratings. Scores ranged from 93% to 100% with a mean of 97%. My self-evaluations for all lessons resulted in an overall 96% instructional fidelity ranging from 80% to 100% across the 23 lessons of the curriculum. Table 4 provides a summary of instructional fidelity check results.

Table 4

Instructional Fidelity Checks

Unit & Lesson	Penny	Ms. Dynamite
*Unit 1 Lesson 1	42/45 (93%)	42/45 (93%)
Unit 1 Lesson 2	16/20 (80%)	
*Unit 2 Lesson 1	40/43 (93%)	40/43 (93%)
Unit 2 Lesson 2	23/23 (100%)	
Unit 2 Lesson 3	11/11 (100%)	
Unit 3 Lesson 1	8/8 (100%)	
Unit 3 Lesson 2	8/8 (100%)	
Unit 4 Lesson 1	21/23 (91%)	
*Unit 4 Lesson 2	17/17 (100%)	17/17 (100%)
Unit 4 Lesson 3	14/14 (100%)	
*Unit 5 Lesson 1	27/27 (100%)	27/27 (100%)
Unit 5 Lesson 2	29/29 (100%)	
*Unit 6 Lesson 1	19/19 (100%)	19/19 (100%)
Unit 6 Lesson 2	13/13 (100%)	
Unit 7 Lesson 1	18/22 (82%)	
Unit 7 Lesson 2	14/14 (100%)	
Unit 7 Lesson 3	9/9 (100%)	
*Unit 8 Lesson 1	19/19 (100%)	19/19 (100%)
Unit 9 Lesson 1	18/18 (100%)	
*Unit 9 Lesson 2	12/12 (100%)	12/12 (100%)
Unit 9 Lesson 3	6/6 (100%)	
Unit 10 Lesson 1	5/5 (100%)	
Unit 10 Lesson 2	3/3 (100%)	
Total	**392/408 (96%)**	**176/182 (97%)**

Notes. Lessons marked with * represent lesson scored by Penny and Ms. Dynamite.

Interrater Agreement

Interrater agreement was calculated for each of the permanent product dependent variables. I, along with one other researcher with a special education background, evaluated and scored each of the participant's completed permanent products that were used for baseline and pre and Posttest data. Interrater Reliability results were reported as a percentage of agreement between the two raters (Mertens, 2005).

Summary of Performance. The information students provided on the pre and post SOP was scored using a rubric (see appendix H) designed for this study, which facilitated consistent evaluation of student answers by another researcher and myself. We each scored all of the pre and post SOP documents using the rubric. The interrater reliability check for the pre SOP document resulted in an interrater agreement of 94% with a range of 80% to 100%. Interrater reliability on the post SOP check resulted in 96% agreement that ranged from 97% to 100%. The overall agreement across pre and post SOP documents was 95%.

Knowledge Quizzes. Student answers on each of the unit knowledge quizzes were graded by one other researcher and me. We independently scored each of the baseline, pre and post knowledge quiz documents, and Interrater Reliability was reported as a percentage of agreement between the two raters (Mertens, 2005). The interrater reliability check for the baseline knowledge quizzes resulted in an interrater agreement of 98% with a range of 95% to 100%. Interrater reliability check for the pretest knowledge quizzes resulted in an interrater agreement of 97% with a range of 94% to 100%. The posttest interrater reliability check resulted in 99% agreement with a range of 95% to 100%.

ME! Scale. One other researcher and myself scored each pre and post *ME!* Scale document. The scored documents were then used to calculate Interrater Reliability, which was reported as a percentage of agreement between the two raters (Mertens, 2005). The interrater reliability check for the pre *ME!* Scale document resulted in a 98% agreement and the post *ME!* interrater reliability check resulted in a 100% agreement.

Social Validity of the *ME!* Curriculum

ME! was developed and validated using a curriculum review process that included focus groups of special education professionals. A draft scope and sequence and unit one were developed and then presented to a focus group of five secondary special education professionals. The group evaluated the unit and scope and sequence via group discussion guided by a feedback and evaluation form. The feedback and evaluation form included eight items answered on a 5-point scale and two open-ended items. The first eight items asked participants specific questions regarding lesson format, appropriateness of activities, lesson length, objectives, procedures, handouts, and usability of the lesson. The last two items included an open-ended question about when and where the lessons should be taught and a question about the participants' overall opinion and other comments regarding the lesson. The remaining units and lessons were evaluated by groups of two to four special education professionals following the same procedure as described for the initial focus group. At the conclusion of each focus group, all participants returned the feedback and evaluation form to the researcher. The forms, meeting notes, and recordings were used to revise each lesson and/or unit as needed.

During this study, additional social validation information was collected from student, parent/guardian and teacher participants. This data came primarily from student

focus groups, parent/guardian interviews, and informal conversations with student participants, and Ms. Dynamite. This information was then used to revise and update the lessons and materials to its current form, which can be downloaded at the Zarrow Center website, http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/trasition-education-materials/me-lessons-for-teaching-self-awareness-and-self-advocacy.html. The results of the study social validity will be presented in the results section.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological Approach. I chose to use a phenomenological approach for this study because it allowed me to examine the study experience from the perspective of the participants. Specifically, I used Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenology approach as it placed greater emphasis on the participant descriptions of an experience and less emphasis on the researcher's interpretation. This approach enabled me to use the experiences of the students, parents/guardians, and special education teacher to further develop the lessons based on participant experiences (Creswell, 2007) throughout the study. Qualitative data were collected to answer research questions four, five and six, which focus on student, teacher, and parent/guardian perceptions of the curriculum content. To obtain qualitative data, all student participants participated in a focus group interview prior to intervention implementation and again following intervention completion. Additional qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews with three parent/guardian participants. Each parent/guardian was interviewed for approximately one hour and 15 minutes.

To increase credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of qualitative data, I utilized three specific strategies. First, I used triangulation to check factual data (age, grade, living

situation, disability, strengths, weaknesses, etc) of each student participant. Student's IEPs, completed permanent products from the *ME!* lessons, parent interviews, observations, and student focus groups were used during the triangulation process. Next, I used peer debriefing (Mertens, 2005) as a means of sharing my hypotheses, study data, initial analysis, findings, and conclusions. This process allowed me to identify my personal biases in the analysis and reconsider findings that reflected such biases.

As a third credibility check, I used informal member checking to help determine if my initial interpretations of participant responses and opinions truly matched what participants had wanted to communicate. To achieve this, I included a daily feedback loop (Mertens et al. 1995) with the teacher and student participants to discuss data collected so far and clarify newly collected data. I also frequently repeated my impression of student and parent participant responses during interviews and focus groups to verify my understanding of their responses. At the conclusion of each interview and focus group meeting, I summarized my impression of participant responses and provided all participants time and opportunity to clarify or change his/her response. This process helped me understand the participant opinions and influenced my ability to accurately describe those experiences and opinions when writing study results.

Qualitative analysis. Qualitative data were collected to answer research questions three, four, and five, which focused on student, teacher, and parent/guardian perceptions of the curriculum content. To obtain qualitative data, all student participants participated in a focus group interview prior to intervention implementation and again following intervention completion. Additional qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews with three parent/guardian participants. Each parent/guardian was interviewed

for approximately one hour and 15 minutes. I also used data collected during the lessons and informal conversation with student and teacher participants to answer questions five and six.

Student interviews. Social validity information was collected from students prior to beginning the intervention and again after intervention completion. During the pre group discussion, students answered questions about the content of the *ME!* lessons. Five guiding questions were asked, with follow-up questions as needed. See Appendix I for a copy of the pre interview questions. During the post interview, the students were asked the same questions as the first focus group along with questions regarding their personal thoughts about the *ME!* lessons. See Appendix J for a copy of the student post lesson focus group questions.

Parent interviews. Three parents were individually interviewed after students received instruction with the *ME!* lessons. Five guiding questions were asked along with follow-up questions as needed. See Appendix K for a copy of the parent interview questions. Two of the interviews took place in the participants home and one interview took place in a local coffee shop.

Individual and group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were analyzed using the process of horizonalization that considered all participant statements to have value (Moustakas, 1994). The process was completed for parent interviews and again for student interviews. Units of meaning, referred to as invariant horizons, were identified from the horizonalized statements (Moustakas, 1994). These statements represented the significant thoughts and ideas taken from the transcripts. After the initial list of horizons was identified, overlapping and repetitive

statements were removed from the original list. The remaining statements were clustered into themes. After clustering and reflecting on the identified themes I developed a textural description for each student and each parent participant. Next, the textural descriptions of the individual parents were used to develop a group composite textural description. The same process was used to develop a description of the student group interviews. The invariant meanings and themes from each parent participant and student group were examined to describe the experiences of the students as a whole and the perceptions of the parents as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). In addition to analysis by the researcher one other research assistant independently examined the transcribed data and identified specific themes and categories within the data. To determine similarities or differences identified by both researchers the findings from each of the transcription examinations were scrutinized.

CHAPTER FOUR: Results

My findings from this study are presented and discussed in order of the five research questions, which include: (a) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student knowledge about individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (b) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student expression of knowledge regarding individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (c) Do high school students value learning about their personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (d) Do parents/guardians value personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy education for their children? and (e) Do special education teachers find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical for classroom instruction?

I used pre and post knowledge quiz scores, *ME!* Scale scores and Summary of Performance scores to answer question one. The second research question required me to analyze how student participants expressed knowledge, therefore I used activities that allowed me to assess specific student actions, both written and verbal. I chose to use the critical thinking activities, self-advocacy task, and student presentations as a way to describe student expression of knowledge regarding their personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy.

Research questions 3, 4, and 5 each required the use of qualitative data, which consisted primarily of interview and focus group transcriptions. However, my written field notes regarding sessions, informal conversations, and observations also guided me as I attempted to provide thorough answers for each of these research questions.

I completed 19 sessions across a six-week period to collect consent forms, baseline data and complete instruction and activities of all 10 units. At the beginning of

this study, the *ME!* lessons included ten units: (1) Getting Started, (2) Learning About Special Education, (3) My Disability Awareness Project, (4) Understanding My Individualized Education Program, (5) Understanding My Rights and Responsibilities, (6) Communicating About My Disability and Needs, (7) Advocating For My Needs in High School, (8) Advocating For My Needs After High School, (9) Developing My Resources, and (10) Putting It All Together.

Shortly after beginning lesson instruction, I became concerned about the disability emphasis and the students' reaction to this emphasis. I believed that all six of the student participants were uncomfortable discussing their disability and at least four of the six students rejected, to some degree, the idea of having a disability. All students were participating in the lessons and activities, but I feared that as we continued students would begin to feel forced into "accepting their disability," which I believed could lead to student disengagement during the study.

The original order of the lessons required students to complete a research project during unit 3 that would require each student to recognize their disability diagnosis and research their specific disability. Furthermore, during unit 3 students would have to research that disability and describe its impact on their life. During unit 2, I made the decision to rearrange the order of the units, resulting in the original unit 3 (My Disability Awareness Project) becoming unit 9. I also changed the unit title to My Abilities and Disabilities Project, in an effort to emphasis each student's abilities as well as their disability. As a result of this change, the original units 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 also changed. The revised order of the units, and the order which they were taught during the study are: (1) Getting Started, (2) Learning About Special Education, (3) Understanding My

Individualized Education Program, (4) Understanding My Rights and Responsibilities, (5) Communicating About My Disability and Needs, (6) Advocating For My Needs in High School, (7) Advocating For My Needs After High School, (8) Developing My Resources, (9) My Abilities and Disabilities Project, and (10) Putting It All Together.

By making these changes early in the study, students were given additional time to digest disability and special education information before "accepting their disability." I believe this change increased student engagement throughout the study and also improved student research projects as they had an increased understanding of special education and disability prior to beginning their projects. Additionally, by the time we reached unit nine, the students and I had developed a trusting relationship that enabled them to feel comfortable with the content and also provided me time to become familiar with each student's personal circumstances. As a result, I felt more confident in my ability to candidly answer each of their questions regarding their personal IEP's, disability, and strengths and weaknesses.

Research Question 1

The first question in this study was: Do the *ME!* lessons increase student knowledge about individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? I used three data sources to answer the first research question. First, the pre and post scores from unit 1-9 knowledge quizzes were analyzed. Next, I analyzed pre and post scores from the *ME!* Scales and, lastly, pre and post results from the student completed Summary of Performance.

Unit knowledge quizzes. Each student participant graph (figure 1) includes knowledge quiz baseline, pretest scores, and posttest scores. The vertical axis represents

percentage of correct scores on each knowledge quiz and ranges from 0 to 100 percent. The horizontal axis represents units 1-9. Each participant obtained 4 baseline data points and 18 intervention data points, nine pretests and nine posttests.

Figure 1. Unit Knowledge Quiz Scores

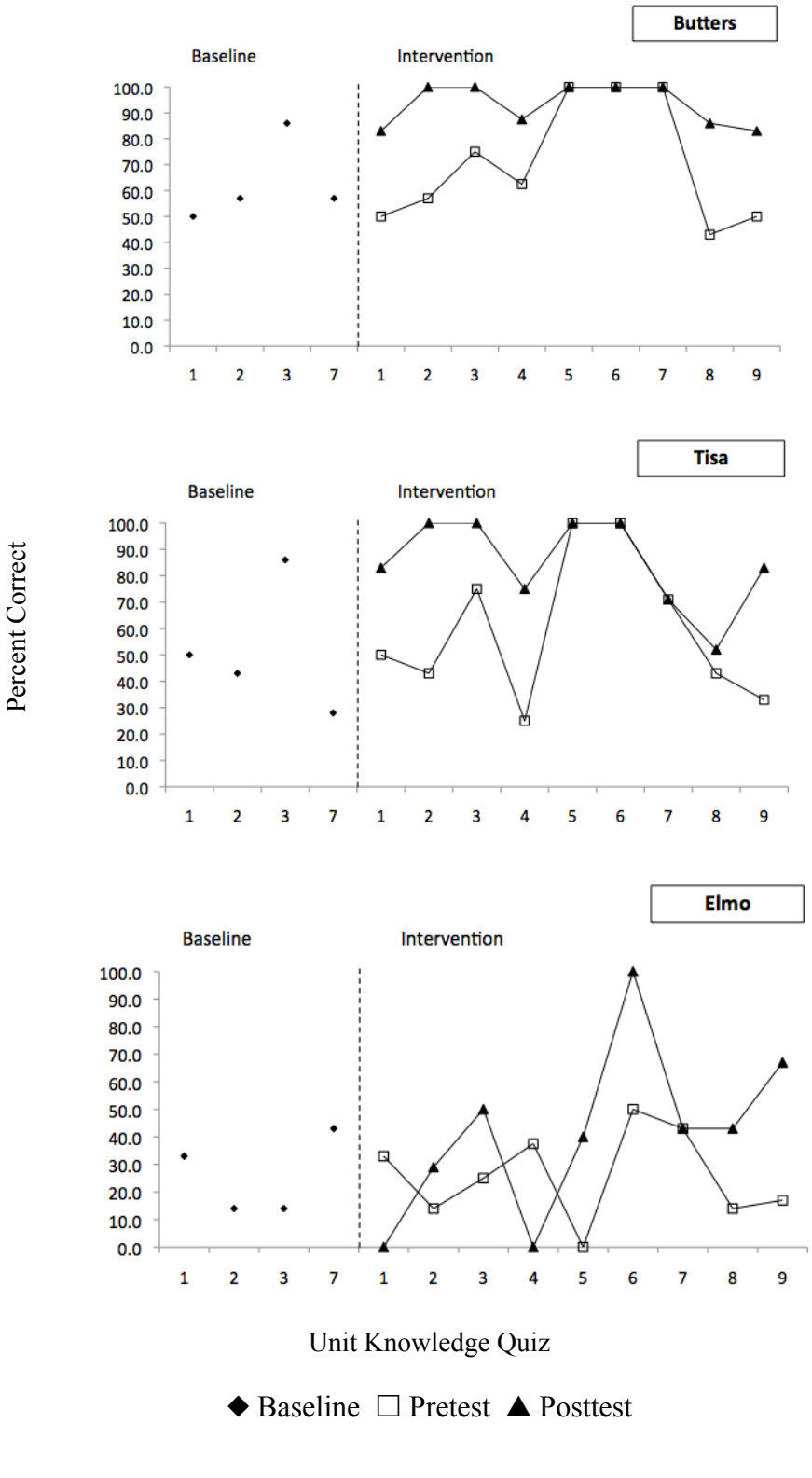
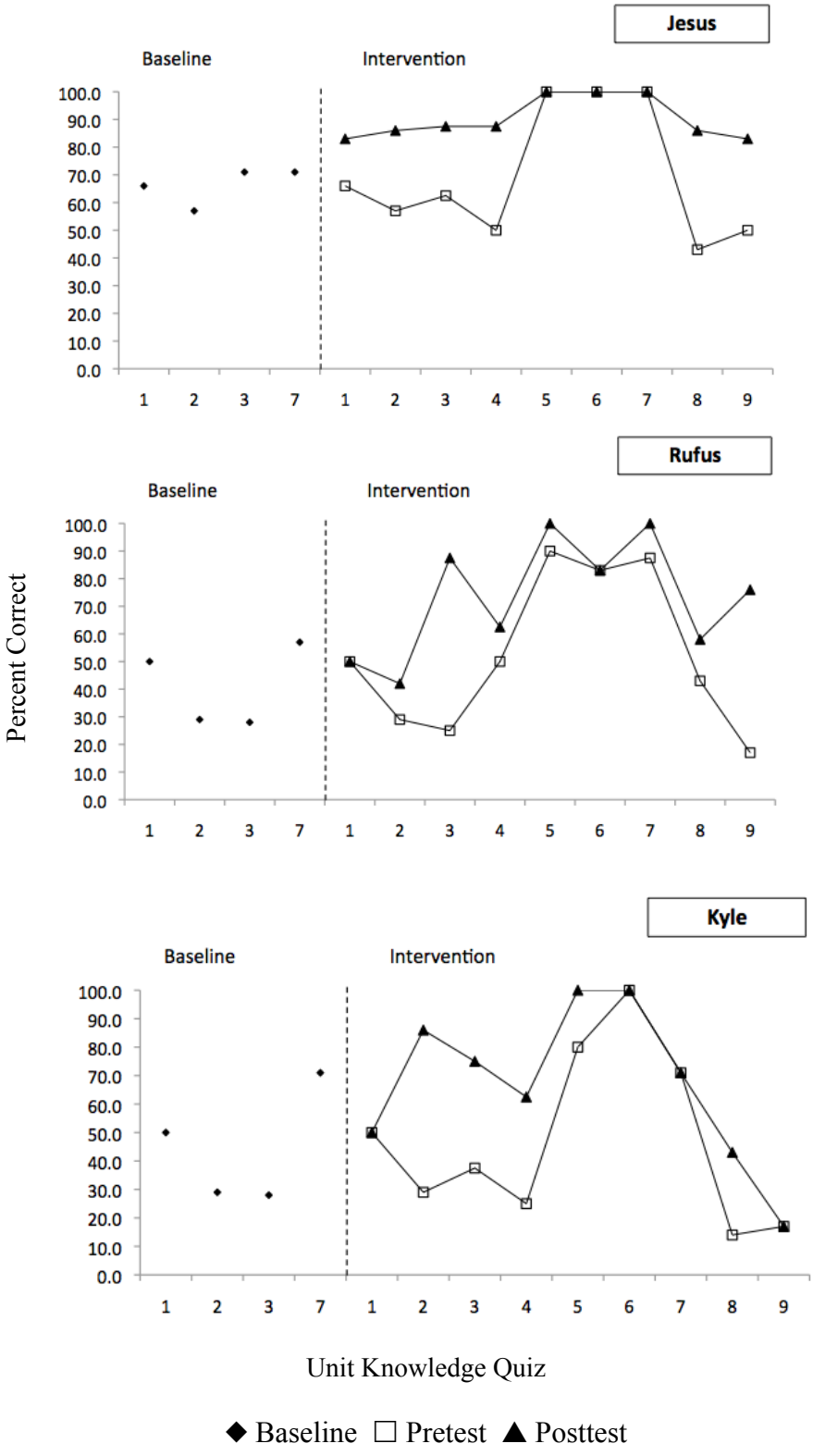


Figure 1. continued



Butters. Baseline scores ranged from 50% to 86% with a mean of 65%. During intervention, Butters pretest scores ranged from 43% to 100% with a mean of 71.5% and his Posttest scores ranged from 83% to 100% with a mean of 91.5%. After the intervention began, a moderate upward level change was observed from 80% to 100% and stayed at this level with small variability for the remainder of the study. Butters attained mastery criteria for 5 of the 9 units (2, 3, 5, 6, and 7) and earned an 83% or higher on the remaining units (1, 4, 8, and 9).

Baseline and Posttest data points were used to calculate PND. The highest baseline data point was 86%. Seven of the 9 intervention Posttest data points exceeded the highest baseline data point, resulting in a .8 effect size. This number suggests that the intervention was a moderately effective intervention for Butters.

Tisa. Baseline scores for Tisa ranged from 28% to 86% with a mean of 52%. The third baseline data point soared to 86% and then dropped to 28%. During intervention, her pretest scores ranged from 25% to 100% with a mean of 60%. Her Posttest scores ranged from 52% to 100% with a mean of 85%. Tisa's baseline data indicate variability. Three of the four data points are declining while one (unit 3) exceeds the other scores by 36 percentage points. There was moderate to large variability in the trend of her Posttest scores during the intervention. After the intervention began a large upward level change was observed with the exception of her unit 8 score. Tisa attained mastery criteria for 4 of the 9 units (2, 3, 5, and 6), and earned a 71% or higher on 4 units (1, 4, 7, and 9) and 52% on unit 8.

Because of the baseline outlier (86%) Tisa's baseline median (47%) was used to calculate PND. Nine of the 9 intervention Posttest data points exceeded 47% resulting in

an effect size of 1.0. This number indicates that the intervention was highly effective for Tisa.

Elmo. During baseline Elmo's scores ranged from 14% to 43% with a mean of 26%. Her first score was 33%, then decreased to 14% for the second and third data point then increased dramatically to 43% for the final baseline data point. During intervention her pretest scores ranged from 0% to 50% with a mean of 26% and her Posttest scores ranged from 0% to 100% with a mean of 41%. Elmo's Posttest scores increased for all but two of the 9 units, which she scored 0. The overall trend exhibits an increased variability in trend and level during baseline and intervention. Elmo attained mastery criteria for 1 of the 9 units (6) and 40% - 67% on five units (3, 5, 7, 8, and 9) and 29% or below on the remaining three units (1, 2 and 4).

Because of the baseline variability, Elmo's baseline median (24%) was used to calculate PND. Seven of the 9 intervention Posttest data points exceeded 24% resulting in an effect size of .8 This number indicates that the intervention was moderately effective for Elmo.

Jesus. Baseline scores for Jesus ranged from 57% to 71% with a mean of 66%. He exhibited an accelerating trend with little variability during baseline. During intervention his pretest scores ranged from 43% to 100% with a mean of 69.8% and Posttest scores ranged from 83% to 100% with a mean of 90%. After the intervention began, a moderate upward level change was observed along with an accelerating to flat trend with little variability. Jesus attained mastery criteria for 3 of the 9 units (5, 6 and 7) and earned between 83% and 87% on the remaining six units.

His highest baseline data point was 71%. Nine of the 9 intervention Posttest data points exceeded the highest baseline data point, resulting in an effect size of 1.0. This number suggests that the intervention was highly effective for Jesus.

Rufus. Baseline scores for Rufus ranged from 28% to 57% with a mean of 41%. During intervention, his pretest scores ranged from 17% to 90% with a mean of 52.7% and his Posttest scores ranged from 42% to 100% with a mean of 73.2%. Rufus attained mastery criteria for 2 of the 9 units (5 and 7) and 63% to 87% on 4 of the units (4, 6, 8, and 9) and 58% or below for the three remaining units (1, 2 and 8).

Rufus exhibited variability during baseline but his scores stayed within 21 points of each other. During intervention his scores remained slightly variable but indicated a moderate inclining trend with an upward level change. Examining the intervention trend line and predicted baseline trend indicates the intervention had a positive effect on increasing Rufus's knowledge quiz scores.

Rufus's highest baseline data point was 57%. Seven of the 9 intervention Posttest data points exceeded the highest baseline data point resulting in an effect size of .8. This number suggests that the intervention was a moderately effective intervention for Rufus.

Kyle. During baseline Kyle's scores ranged from 28% to 71% with a mean of 45%. During intervention pretest scores ranged from 14% to 100% with a mean of 47% and Posttest scores ranged from 17% to 100% with a mean of 67%. Kyle attained mastery criteria on 2 of the 9 units (5 and 6), 63% to 86% on four units (2, 3, 4 and 7) and a 50% or below for the remaining three units (1, 8, and 9).

Kyle exhibited variability during baseline and during intervention. The variability in his scores makes it difficult to infer intervention effects based on any trend or level

changes. Because of the baseline variability, Kyle's baseline median (40%) was used to calculate PND. Seven of the 9 intervention Posttest data points exceeded 40% resulting in an effect size of .9. This number suggests that the intervention was highly effective for Kyle.

Grand PND. Grand PND effect size was calculated using knowledge quiz data points from the six student participants. Baseline data points across participants exhibited variability and three of the participants' baseline data included an outlier, thus the median was used to report a more meaningful effect size. The overall baseline median was 50% and 43 of the 54 Posttest intervention data points exceeded 50% resulting in an effect size of .8. This number suggests this was a moderately effective intervention for the group.

ME! Scale pre and post scores. Ideally, each participant would have responded "yes" to the first 14 questions on the *ME!* Scale to indicate they understood that they have a disability, are in special education, understand their IEP, and have an idea about their future plans. Table 5 provides a summary of student participants pre and post *ME!* Scale scores obtained during this study as well as overall group score results. All student participants made significant gains in the percent of "yes" responses between the pre and post *ME!* Scales. Overall, the student participants answered "yes" 38% of the time on the pretest, and increased that by 52 percentage points to 90% on the Posttest scores. The number of "not sure" responses declined from 46% on the pretest to 6% on the Posttest and "no" responses declined from 16% on the pretest to 4% on the Posttest.

Table 5

ME! Scale Items 1-14(Yes, No, Not Sure)

	Pre Test Scores			Posttest Scores		
	Yes	Not Sure	No	Yes	Not Sure	No
Butters	8 (57.1)	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	14 (100)	0	0
*Elmo	2 (14.3)	9 (64.3)	2 (14.3)	14 (100)	0	0
Jesus	7 (50)	4 (28.6)	3 (21.4)	13 (92.9)	1 (7.1)	0
Kyle	1 (7.1)	7 (50)	6 (42.9)	10 (71.4)	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)
Rufus	4 (28.6)	9 (64.3)	1 (7.1)	12 (85.7)	2 (14.3)	0
Tisa	10 (71.4)	4 (28.6)	0	13 (92.9)	1 (7.1)	0
Total	32 (38)	38 (46)	13 (16)	76 (90)**	5 (6)	3 (4)

**Note.* Elmo did not answer item number 12 on her pre *ME!* Scale.
** P = .005, d = 1.9

Using items 1 through 14 of the *ME!* Scale, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on students' *ME!* Scale scores. There was a statistically significant increase ($p < .005$) in the overall *ME!* Scale scores between pre and post completion. The mean increase on the *ME!* Scale scores was 7.67 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.8 to 11.5. Cohen's effect size value ($d = 1.9$) suggests the intervention had a large effect on student *ME!* Scale scores.

In addition to *ME!* Scale items 1-14, which required a response of "no" "not sure" or "yes," the *ME!* Scale included five open-ended questions that asked students to identify their strengths and weaknesses at school and outside of school. Each student also had to identify the most important thing in his/her life. Table 6 summarizes the number of answers each participant provided on the pre and Posttest *ME!* Scale open-ended items.

Prior to the intervention, four students clearly identified three strengths while at school. One student-identified two strengths and Elmo identified one. The student-identified items could each be classified into one of three categories. First, sports/extra curricular activities was identified as a strength six times. Students identified core subject classes five times and making friends/getting along well with others was identified four times as strengths. Following intervention completion, all six participants indentified three things they consider themselves to be good at while at school. Answers were similar to those listed on the pretest and included eight responses for sports, six responses for core subject classes and four responses for making friends/getting along with others.

When asked to identify in-school weaknesses two students identified three items, two students identified two, and one student-identified one weakness. Of the 13 student-identified weaknesses, six indicated core subject classes, three identified paying attention/knowing what is going on in class, two identified needing help with elective classes (Spanish and ROTC), one identified maintaining good grades, and one student-identified staying out of trouble.

When asked to identify three strengths while outside of school, only two participants were able to identify three strengths on the pretest. One student identified two strengths, two identified one, and Kyle identified nothing. Those responses included making friends/getting along with others (3), sports (2), working (1), helping others (1), texting (1), and eating (1). After intervention completion, all six students identified three strengths outside of school. Student-identified strengths included helping others (2), making friends (3), outgoing (3), chores (3), work (2) and sports (5).

Five student participants easily identified one or more things as important in his/her life on both the pre and Posttest. Kyle was the only student that did not answer this item on the pretest, but he did identify five things on the Posttest. All student answers on this item included family, friends, God, self, and pets.

Table 6.

ME! Scale Items 15 – 19 (Open Ended)

		Butters		Elmo		Jesus		Kyle		Rufus		Tisa		Mean	
Item		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
15.	List 3 things you are good at when you are at school.	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.50
16.	List 3 things you need help with when you are at school.	3	2	3	3	2	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	1.67	2.50
17.	List 3 things you are good at when you are somewhere other than school.	2	3	3	3	1	3	0	3	1	3	3	3	1.33	2.50
18.	List 3 things you need help with when you are somewhere other than school.	2	3	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	3	1	3	.17	1.67
19.	The most important thing in my life is:	1	1	4	3	2	2	0	5	1	1	3	3	.50	.70
	Total	11	12	11	12	7	14	4	15	7	13	12	15	2.05	3.45

Summary of performance. Using items 1 through 17 of the SOP scoring rubric, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on SOP scores. There was a statistically significant increase ($p < .005$) in the overall SOP scores between pre and post completion. The mean increase on the SOP scores was 20.60 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 10.19 to 31.01. Cohen's effect size value ($d = 2.2$) suggests this intervention had a large effect on SOP scores.

The pre and post Summary of Performance documents were scored using a rubric (Appendix H) developed for this study. Table 7 includes pre and post student scores, overall group score, and total gains made by each student as well as overall group gain. Student pretest scores ranged from 0 to 23 with a mean score of 13 (20%). All student participants made significant gains between pre and post Summary of Performance completion. The greatest individual gains were earned by Kyle and Elmo who each made a 27 point increase, and the least gain by Tisa with a 12 point increase. The mean pretest score was 13 (20%) and mean Posttest score was 32 (50%). As a group, students made a total gain of 85 points from 76 to 161, resulting in a 30% increase in the group gain.

Table 7

Summary of Performance Gain Scores

	Pre	Post	Gain
*Butters	20 (33%)	na	na
Elmo	8 (13%)	35 (55%)	27 (42%)
Jesus	16 (25%)	29 (45%)	13 (20%)
Kyle	0 (0%)	27 (42%)	27 (42%)
Rufus	9 (14%)	35 (55%)	26 (41%)
Tisa	23 (40%)	35 (55%)	12 (15%)
Total	76 (20%)	161 (50%)	85 (30%)
Mean	13 (20%)	32 (50%)	21 (33%)

* Butters did not complete a post SOP

In addition to individual and overall scores I analyzed the SOP data according to four categories included in the document (see table 8). Those categories include (a) goals, (b) disability's impact, (c) supports, and (d) accommodations. The first category of the SOP required students to identify living, learning, and working goals and list steps for achieving those goals. The mean score for the goals section increased from 2.30 on the pretest to 5.35 on the Posttest for a gain of 3.05.

Category two, disability's impact, exhibited a gain of 1.20 with a pretest mean of .20 and a Posttest mean of 1.40. The largest increase in disability's impact sections was on the first item, which required students to identify their disability. According to SOP data. Rufus was the only participant of the five that attempted to identify his/her disability prior to the study. Five participants provided a response at the completion of this study. The only student participant that did not provide a Posttest answer to this item was Butters and he did not complete the post SOP.

Students struggled with the next section, supports, which exhibited a score decrease between pre and post completion. The first item in the supports category had a pretest mean of .15 and a Posttest mean of .15. The second item in this category decreased from a pretest mean of .15 to a Posttest mean of 0.

The forth category, accommodations, had a pretest mean of .15 and a Posttest mean of 1.15 for a total gain of 1. The largest mean gain within this category occurred on the first item, which increased from 0 to .55.

Table 8

Summary of Performance

	Butters		Elmo		Jesus		Kyle		Rufus		Tisa		Totals		Mean	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Goals:																
My Living Goal	4	na	2	4	4	4	0	4	1	4	4	4	11	20	.55	1.0
Steps to achieving my living goal	1	na	2	3	0	3	0	3	1	3	3	3	6	15	.30	.75
My Learning Goal	4	na	1	4	4	4	0	0	1	4	4	4	10	16	.50	.80
Steps to achieving my learning goal	1	na	1	3	2	4	0	4	1	4	4	4	8	19	.40	.95
My Working Goal	1	na	1	4	0	4	0	4	1	4	4	4	6	20	.30	1.0
Steps to achieving my working goal	1	na	1	4	0	3	0	2	1	4	3	4	5	17	.25	.85
Category Total															2.30	5.35
My Disability's Impact:																
My primary disability is:	3	na	0	4	0	4	0	2	3	3	0	3	3	16	.15	.80
On my school work such as assignments, projects, tests, grades:	1	na	0	3	0		0	3	0	3	1	3	1	12	.05	.60
On school and/or extra-curricular activities:	0	na	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.0	.0
On my ability to get around independently:	0	na	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.0	.0
Category Total															.20	1.40

Table 8. Continued

	Butters		Elmo		Jesus		Kyle		Rufus		Tisa		Totals		Mean	
Supports	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
What works best, such as aids, adaptive equipment, or other services:	1	na	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	.15	.15
What does not work well:	3	na	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	.15	.0
Category Total															.30	.15
Accommodations That Work for Me in High School:																
Setting: (distraction-free, special lighting, adaptive furniture, etc.)	0	na	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	3	0	3	0	11	.0	.55
Timing/Scheduling: (flexible schedule, several sessions, frequent breaks, etc.)	0	na	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	.0	.15
Response: (assistive technology, mark in book or on test, Brailer, colored overlays, dictate words to scribe, word processor, record responses, etc.)	0	na	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	6	.0	.30
Presentation: (large print, Braille, assistive devices, magnifier, read or sign items, calculator, re-read directions, etc.)	0	na	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	.0	.15
Category Total															.15	1.15

Research Question 2

The second research question in this study was: Do the *ME!* lessons increase student expression of knowledge regarding personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? I used data from the critical thinking activities, self-advocacy task, and PowerPoint presentations to answer this question.

Critical thinking activities. Each of the critical thinking activities provided an opportunity for all student participants to discuss real life scenarios related to disability, needs, strengths, and self-advocacy. Table 9 lists the number of student-identified problems and solutions for each of the critical thinking activities. Between the pretest and Posttest, no growth was exhibited on the number of problems identified for three of the seven activities, two critical thinking activities increased by 1 student-identified problem, one activity increase by two identified problems, and for one of the activities, students identified an additional three problems during the Posttest. Overall, the total number of student-identified problems increased by seven between pre and post critical thinking activity completion.

Between the pretest and Posttest scores for number of student-identified solutions two of the seven activities experienced no increase, one critical thinking activity increased by one identified solution, one activity increase by two, one increased by three, one increased by four, and for one of the activities, students identified an additional six solutions during the Posttest. Overall, the number of student-identified solutions increased between pre and post critical thinking activity completion.

Table 9

Critical Thinking Score Summary

Student-identified:	Unit 3		Unit 4		Unit 5		Unit 6a		Unit 6b		Unit 7		Unit 9	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Problems	3	4	4	7	2	2	3	3	3	3	6	8	1	2
Solutions	2	4	3	3	1	7	2	5	4	5	2	2	2	6

The student-identified problems and solutions for Unit 3: Getting to Know My IEP are listed in table 10. After learning about their IEP's, students became increasingly aware of the importance of IEP meeting participation if they hope to have their voice heard. At the completion of this unit, students identified two additional solutions for this critical thinking activity. Both of the solutions reflect the student's belief that Sonia needed to understand her IEP and find a way to make her voice heard.

Table 10

Unit 3 Critical Thinking Activity – Getting to Know My IEP

	Pre	Post
Problems	• Sonia does not like attending her IEP meeting • Sonia does not understand her IEP • She does not like to talk at her IEP meetings	• Sonia does not like attending her IEP meeting • Sonia does not understand her IEP • She does not like to talk at her IEP meetings • She does not know what to say or do while in her meeting
Solutions	• Start talking at her meetings • Do not attend the meetings	• Sonia should ask her mom to help her understand the IEP • She should ask her IEP teacher for help • She should learn what is on her IEP • Sonia should make a list of things she wants to talk about during the meeting

During unit 4, students learned about their educational rights and responsibilities. As students worked through the unit, they became familiar with the process of disclosing their disability in order to receive accommodations in higher education settings. Students also learned that special education services, as they know them in high school, do not typically exist in higher education settings. Both of these aspects can be seen in the post problems and solutions students identified during the unit 4 critical thinking activity.

The specificity and depth students exhibited regarding the aspects of this scenario improved greatly by the post critical thinking activity. However, the students did have a difficult time thinking of solutions and problems outside of their high school special education experience. For example, students focused more on the lack of special education, an IEP, and special education teachers during college instead of the personal responsibilities of students. They also strongly believed retaking a failed test, a common practice in high school, to be the best solution for college students failing a class. However, all six students also exhibited knowledge regarding disability services in higher education, which was something none of the participants exhibited knowledge about prior to this unit.

Table 11

Unit 4 Critical Thinking Activity – Learning About My Rights and Responsibilities

	Pre	Post
Problems	• Flunking out of school • Going to a big school • Not understanding math • Not understanding history	• Flunking out of school • Going to a big school • Not understanding math • Not understanding history • Not having and IEP anymore • Not having an IEP teacher anymore • Parents will be mad for flunking
Solutions	• Drop out of college and get a job • Work harder at school work • Request to retake the tests that were failed already	• Find the people that work at the school to help students with disabilities • Disclose disability to instructors and ask them how to get help • Request to retake the tests that were failed already

During unit 5, students reviewed basic communication skills and practiced using those skills during class. The critical thinking activity for this unit exhibited the largest increase in the number of student-identified solutions between pre and post activity completion. During the post activity, all students discussed aloud the importance of "acting right" when having a serious conversation with others.

Table 12

Unit 5 Critical Thinking Activity – Improving My Communication Skills

	Pre	Post
Problems	• Chris is in trouble for absences and tardies • He is mad	• Chris is always late or absent • He is going to be punished
Solutions	• Stop being late and absent	• Explain to the principal why he is late. • Stop showing a bad attitude while talking to the principal • Sit up in his chair • Do not roll eyes • Look serious but not angry • Use a normal tone of voice • Do not interrupt the principal

The unit 6 critical thinking activity was completed differently than those completed in units 3-5. During unit 6 (Advocating For My Needs in High School), students were divided into two groups and each group developed a critical thinking scenario based on the personal experiences of the group members. Each group then presented the scenario to the class and led a discussion about the problems and solutions in the scenario. Group 1 consisted of Tisa, Elmo, and Kyle who developed a scenario about Elmo taking her driver's license test. Elmo described to the class her concern about failing her driving test. She explained that she was nervous about the written part of the test and feared that her nervousness would cause her to make mistakes on the driving part of the exam.

Table 13

Unit 6(a) Critical Thinking Activity– Driver's License

	Pre	Post
Problems	• She does not have her driver's license yet • She might not pass the test • She might not understand the written part of the test	• She does not have her drivers license yet • She might not pass the test • She might not understand the written part of the test
Solutions	• Take the test and see what happens • Ask for help from her friends who have already taken the test	• Take the test and see what happens • Ask for help from her friends who have already taken the test • Take the practice test online • Talk to the DMV about getting accommodations on the test • Be calm, you can always retake the test

Group 2 consisted of Rufus, Jesus, and Butters who developed a scenario based on problems Rufus was experiencing with his uncle. Rufus often felt anxious and stressed while at home because his uncle constantly yelled at him. Rufus described two specific situations that included his uncle getting very angry because Rufus had fed the dogs incorrectly and left the garage door open too long. The major focus of the scenario was Rufus's constant stress and the impact it had on his daily routine. He described feeling sad, angry, and confused about how to manage his situation.

Table 14

Unit 6(b) Critical Thinking Activity – Getting Yelled At

	Pre	Post
Problems	• He is in a really bad situation • His uncle is acting like a jerk • Rufus is stressed out all of the time	• He is in a really bad situation • His uncle is acting like a jerk • Rufus is stressed out all of the time
Solutions	• Rufus should tell his uncle to stop acting like a jerk • Talk to the school counselor • Talk to his IEP teacher • Try to ignore it until Rufus can move out of the house	• Rufus should try to talk to his uncle when he is not mad to explain how bad it makes him feel to get yelled at so often • Talk to the school counselor • Talk to his IEP teacher • Try to ignore it until Rufus can move out of the house • Get a job so he will not have to be at home as much

During unit 7, students learned about advocating for their needs after high school. The critical thinking activity for this unit focused on self-advocacy on the job. At the completion of this unit, students were able to express concerns regarding time and place of disability disclosure. Butters spoke specifically of his concerns regarding disability disclosure, "It's like what we said about not always wanting or needing to tell people about a disability. But, this time he needed to tell someone and he didn't and people got hurt. That's a lot different than writing down a message wrong. That's why we need to know when to tell about a disability and when not to."

Table 15

Unit 7 Critical Thinking Activity – Advocating For My Need After High School

	Pre	Post
Problems	• He has dyslexia • The new gauge system • The new type of report is difficult to read • Drew made a mistake that hurt people • He kept a secret that he should not have kept • He got fired	• He has dyslexia • The new gauge system • The new type of report is difficult to read • Drew made a mistake that hurt people • He kept a secret that he should not have kept • He got fired • Drew did not disclose his disability before it became a problem
Solutions	• None, he got fired • He should have told his boss about the problems earlier	• None really, just learn from the mistake • Apologize to the people that got hurt

During unit 9, all students researched their personal disability and the effects of that disability on their life. Understanding the impact one's disability has on his/her educational needs is the main focus of this unit. While identifying solutions for the unit 9 critical thinking activity, students often focused on retaking the test, as they did during unit 4. However, by the end of this unit, students were noticeably more comfortable with the idea of asking for help, even from teachers they would not have previously asked for help.

Table 16

Unit 9 Critical Thinking Activity – My Abilities and Disabilities Project

	Pre	Post
Problems	• He is going to flunk Biology	• He is going to flunk Biology • The teacher will not help
Solutions	• Jeremy should take his tests in the resource room • He should retake the class next year with a different teacher	• Show his IEP to the Biology teacher • Explain that he does not read and write as well as most students • Tell the Biology teacher that the tutoring has not helped • Ask to take his tests in the resource room • Ask about doing extra credit work • Find a different Biology teacher to get help from

Self-advocacy task. The self-advocacy task was another activity used as a measure of student expression of personal disability knowledge, needs, strengths and self-advocacy. The self-advocacy task was completed as a role-play in the classroom and scored using worksheet 7-2 (see appendix G).

Nine points were available to students based on their performance during the role-play activity conducted in the resource room. Four of the six student participants earned nine out of nine points, Butters earned eight points and Kyle earned no points as he chose not to complete the task. Butters earned eight points instead of nine because he did not address item nine on worksheet 7-2, which required him to verbally summarize the accommodations we had agreed were appropriate for him to receive on the assignment. Overall, each of the student participants, excluding Kyle, displayed the ability to

successfully request accommodations during the role-play activity. They each used appropriate communication skills, correctly identified his/her disability and explained how the disability, affected their performance on the identified assignment. Students then described two accommodations and explained how those accommodations would be helpful and then asked for my feedback on the accommodations. To close the mock meetings, each student thanked me for taking the time to meet to discuss the accommodations.

After each role-play, I asked the student if he/she would use this process to self-advocate in other classes. Of the five that completed the role-play, three (Jesus, Butters and Elmo) stated that they would use the process to self-advocate in other classes. Rufus and Tisa indicated that they would likely use the process again, but only if they felt comfortable with the classroom teacher. Rufus stated "maybe, it depends on who it is. I think I could do it." Tisa said "probably, only if the teacher isn't mean. If it was a mean teacher, one I didn't know or like I probably wouldn't. I just wouldn't do it." When asked what she would do, Tisa responded "nothing...hate the class and probably fail or maybe if I had a friend I would get help from them I guess."

Kyle did not feel like the self-advocacy task applied to him as he does not believe he has a disability. When asked if he thought he might use this process at some point he stated "I don't have a disability therefore I cannot say"

Student PowerPoint presentations. The last source of data used to answer research question 2 were the student PowerPoint presentations that took place during class after all lessons had been taught. Students used the information from their unit 9 research project to create a PowerPoint presentation that included an introduction, name

and description of disability, education goal, employment goal, independent living goal, strengths, weaknesses, and something the student is looking forward to in the future As each student presented, each of their classmates and I completed the presentation response form (Appendix L). Once all presentations were complete, the class discussed the response form scores for each student and came to a group consensus about the final score for each item on the form for each student. The scores discussed here are the final scores agreed upon by the entire group for each of their peers (see table 17).

The first six items on the response form addressed presentation/communication skills, which included eye contact, posture, nonverbal communication, volume/tone, organization, and information. Each item was scored on a 5-point scale with 1 indicating "needs more practice" and 5 indicating "perfect." A total of 30 points was available on the first section of the response form with each of the six items being scored from 1 to 5. Items 7 through 13 on the response form were used to grade the content of each presentation, which included an introduction, name and description of disability, education goals, employment goal, independent living goal, strengths, and something the presenter was looking forward to in the future. Items 7 through 13 were scored as "yes" or "no" as a way to indicate if each item was included in the presentation. Students received a 0 for each "no" and a 1 for each "yes."

The group average for presentation/communication skills was 86%, which was exceeded by Tisa, Jesus, Elmo and Butters. Butters earned the highest overall score on the presentation, earning a 93% on presentation/communication skills and 100% on the content of his presentation. Kyle earned the lowest score (77%) on presentation/communication skills with his lowest score being 3 on eye contact. Kyle also

earned the lowest score (86%) on the presentation content, earning 6 of the 7 possible points. Kyle lost a point for failing to accurately identify or describe his disability during the presentation. The other five student participants each earned 100% on the presentation content.

Table 17

Student Presentation Scores

Response Form Item	Butters	Elmo	Jesus	Kyle	Rufus	Tisa	Mean
1. Eye contact	5	4	3	3	3	3	3.5
2. Posture	4	5	4	4	4	4	4.2
3. Nonverbal	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.4
4. Volume/Tone	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.8
5. Organization	5	4	5	4	5	5	4.7
6. Information	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.8
Total score for items 1-6	28 (93%)	27 (90%)	26 (87%)	23 (77%)	25 (83%)	26 (87%)	25.8 (86%)
7. Introduction	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
8. Name and description of disability	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	
9. Education goal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
10. Employment goal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
11. Independent living goal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
12. Strength/Type of Smart	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
13. Something I am looking forward to	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Total score for items 7-13	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	6 (86%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	6.8 (98%)

According to the results of the critical thinking activities students did increase their overall ability and/or willingness to discuss issues directly related to disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy. The number of student-identified problems increase from by 7 and the number of student-identified solutions increased by six across the seven critical thinking activities. Additionally, during the post critical thinking activities, students displayed a broader awareness of their personal rights, responsibilities, communication skills, resources, and disability disclosure.

Student performance during the self-advocacy task indicated the ability of five of the six participants to request accommodations in a high school setting. Of those five, three stated that they would use the process for other classes and two stated that they would likely use the process sometime in the future.

Based on the student presentations, five of the six student participants were able to create a written PowerPoint product that identified and described their personal disability. Each of those five students were also able to describe and discuss their disability aloud to the class during the presentation. All six of the participants were able to identify at least one strength in a written product and then describe that strength aloud to the class. Additionally, all six students identified an education goal, independent living goals, and employment goal that included three steps to achieving each goal.

Research Question 3

The third question of this study was: Do students value learning about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? To answer this question I used qualitative data collected across the span of this study, which included pre and post student focus groups, informal conversations, and student observations. Findings related

to research question three are presented in four categories: disability, needs and strengths, self-advocacy, and communication.

Across my field notes and student focus group transcripts, student participants repeatedly stated that it is important for students with disabilities to know about their disability, know their personal strengths and weaknesses, and learn how to self-advocate.

During the post student focus group, I specifically asked students what they thought about the lessons and activities. I then asked if they believed the information would be helpful to them in the future. Every student stated that he/she believed that the material covered would be very helpful in the future. Students indicated that the information would be helpful in work and school settings. For example, Butters stated **"**I think it's going to help me do better for college and for high school." Rufus said "I think it can help me with getting my job." Jesus appreciated having an opportunity to learn about his IEP "Okay this sounds weird but it I kind of liked looking at my IEP because…I did not know what was on that thing." While Tisa had doubts in the beginning, she found herself enjoying the lessons during the study "At first I thought I would hate it... But it turned out that I liked what we did."

Disability. During the pre focus group, students responded with the following when asked specifically: How would you feel if you were told you have a disability? Jesus and Butters stated that it would not affect them in any way, but Rufus said "it would make me feel really low about myself." Tisa also stated that being told she had a disability would upset her. When asked the question she stated "I don't know, I mean I think it would upset me. It would make me feel really stupid. I would get over it, I mean I would have to…it's not like I could just always hide it." During the post focus group

meeting, Tisa responded to the same question with **"**I feel… like now I really know what learning disabilities mean… it don't mean something's wrong with me."

When asked if a student should be taught about his/her disability, all students believed that it was necessary to learn about the disability. Tisa stated "if you understand your disability and how you got it then you don't feel so bad. And if you understand it…. when people start judging me because of things like reading or spelling I can tell them I have a disability." Similarly, Jesus spoke of needing to know about individual disabilities, stating, "if you don't know about something you can't control it." Tisa pointed out that understanding her disability helped give her the confidence she needed to self-advocate. During the post focus group interview, she stated, "now I really know what learning disabilities mean…I feel like I know what I'm talking about now… if I had to tell people about my learning disability." Butters also emphasized the need to understand his disability, strengths and weakness and using that information when self-advocating. He stated " just because they're [teachers, parents, counselors, etc] grown-ups doesn't mean they understand what were good at and what we need help with. Like I've had some teachers, they're really nice, but they don't have a clue about what it's like to be me."

Needs and strengths. In at least nine of the 19 sessions, students directly or indirectly indicated the importance of knowing one's personal strengths and weaknesses. In both the pre and post focus group meetings, all student participants stated that this was important to them.

According to Jesus, understanding personal strengths and weaknesses affects both school and job choices. "It's really important…if you don't know what you are good at

you don't know how to pick your classes and your job and stuff like that." Tisa agreed with him, stating **"**it's really hard if you're not good at something and you still have to do that something all the time. It's better to find out what you're good at…" Rufus emphasized the need to understand strengths and weaknesses as a way to avoid unhappiness in the future. According to him, " if you're not sure what you're good at you might end up trying to do something and you suck at and you spend the rest your life hating what you're doing."

Self-advocacy. In at least seven of the 19 sessions, students indicated that it is important to know how to self-advocate. Jesus felt it was important for him to self-advocate because he disagreed with some of the information on his IEP, but was not sure how to get it changed. When asked if learning how to self-advocate was helpful, he stated " Yes, because now I will not be in ROTC next year." Butters also believed that understanding the IEP played a significant role in advocating for what he needs at school "they [students] have an IEP and they should learn what an IEP is and they should go to their meetings and they should tell people what they need help with."

Communication. According to Tisa, self-advocacy and communication skills are both important when she needs to ask for help at school. "I think it [self-advocacy] can help me out with talking to my teachers…even though I talk a lot, if I have a teacher I can't ask questions to I just really…shut down in class and I feel like crap and then I get mad." Butters agreed with Tisa and emphasized how not self-advocating in school can have negative effects on students "It's really important, because if you can't ask for help when you need it you're probably going to flunk your classes."

Butters also pointed out that self-advocacy has a time and a place and reminded the class about Drew in the unit 8 case study. “It’s like what we said about not always wanting or needing to tell people about a disability…That’s why we need to know when to tell about a disability and when not to.” The student discussion that followed Butters statement indicates that while all of the student participants recognize the importance of self-advocacy, they also believe that possible consequences of disability disclosure complicate the self-advocacy process.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question of this study was: Do parents value their students learning about his/her disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? I used data from parent interviews to answer this question. Findings are presented in four categories: self-awareness, needs and strengths, disability awareness education, and self-advocacy.

Parent interviews were conducted with three parent/guardian participants to gain an understanding of parent/guardian opinions toward disability, needs, strengths, and self-advocacy education for their child. The interviewed participants included two grandmothers and one mother. After analysis of interview data, meaningful statements were categorized into four themes addressed in research question 4. Those four themes included self-awareness, needs and strengths, disability awareness, and self-advocacy. All three interviewed parent/guardian participants placed significant value on the ability of their child to realistically assess their personal strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, each of the interviewed parent/guardian participants placed great value on the ability of their child to understand their disability. All three also expressed concerns regarding their

ability to help their child learn accurate disability information and questioned how having a disability would influence future education and job opportunities for their child.

Self-awareness. Each of the parent/guardian participants were asked to define self-awareness and describe how self-awareness might affect their child. All three participants provided similar responses, which related to the idea of self-awareness referring to a person's ability to understand and recognize one's personal strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Of the three interviewees, Butters grandmother, Ilene, placed the greatest emphasis on self-awareness.

> If Butters is going to be successful he has to know what he can and can't do. I hate to say he can't do something but as adults we need to be realistic about what one can do to earn a living. It's not helpful for the kids if we make them believe they can do anything. The truth is, Butters is good a lot of things and it's important to me that he understands the things he's good at and is realistic about the things he needs help with…I would say that self-awareness is being realistic about what one can and cannot do.

Letha, Rufus's grandmother, stated: "people better know what they can and can't do for school and work. They might not always want to know it but they better if they are going to do alright as adults…Self-awareness, I don't know if I use the right word for that but as long as he [Rufus] gets help with knowing what he needs to learn that is good."

Mindy, Kyle's mother, stated that self-awareness "is people knowing about their self and their situation." She also emphasized that self-awareness may vary from person to person bases on personal circumstances. "I would say it [self-awareness] comes in different ways and levels for different people."

Needs and strengths. As indicated in the discussion about self-awareness, all parent/guardian participants stated that it is important for their child to have a realistic understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. During each interview, I asked: "How important do you think it is for your child to understand his/her strengths and weaknesses as a student"? Ilene and Letha both expressed concern regarding the willingness of adults to honestly discuss student strengths and weaknesses. Ilene stated

> It's not helpful for the kids if we make them believe that they can do anything…I am older than most people with children Butters age. I worry about what will happen to him when I'm gone. It's important for him to understand things [strengths and weaknesses] so he can make the right decisions about work and school…I want him to have good life, not struggle because he doesn't get it.

Letha expressed a similar opinion regarding the need for adults to honestly educate students about personal strengths and weaknesses.

> I don't want to sound ugly or nothing but it's a waste when we're dishonest with the young people…I admit I come from an old generation but I can tell you that we all still have to work for a living and that's not changing. I worry that Rufus will have a hard time with things, but he tries real hard on everything he does. He's a good boy and if he knows what he needs to work on he'll do it.

Letha went on to describe Rufus's effort to improve his writing before using Facebook to avoid looking foolish in front of his friends. She used this as an example of why people should be honest with Rufus regarding his strengths and weaknesses. "If he really knows about it he will work to do better. If he don't know about it how's he going to know what he ought to be working on?"

Mindy clearly stated that it is important for Kyle to understand his strengths and weaknesses, but struggled with what Kyle perceives as important strengths and weaknesses.“…he knows what interests him for fun. Other things like school or jobs, that is hard because he has his own way of thinking about that. ” Mindy spoke in length about Kyle’s interests such as Star Wars, Bionicles, video games, cooking, and spending time with his grandfather. She also expressed concern that things Kyle considered to be important did not necessarily align with what other people considered to be important aspects of self-awareness, especially for people Kyle’s age. “The things he is interested in doing are not really things that can earn him a living as an adult”. Mindy then went on to describe how the one career plan that Kyle hoped to achieve was joining the Air Force after high school graduation. Mindy knew Kyle’s disability prevented him from joining the Air Force and she worried how that would affect him in the future. “I have told him kindly that because of the autism he won’t be able to go to the Air Force. He seems to understand and be okay with it but later he talks about joining the Air Force. I worry that he’s going to really be heartbroken about this at some point.”

All three women spoke at length regarding their child’s need to realistically understand his strengths and weaknesses. This need was typically discussed in relation to their child’s disability. All three women clearly want their child to know his strengths and weaknesses and also stated that doing so might require them to have their feelings hurt. While they each empathized for their child in this situation, each parent/guardian stated that the future benefits would be worth whatever pain it caused presently and would likely led to a more successful future for their child.

Disability awareness education. When asked: Do you think kids with disabilities should be taught about their disability? All three parents/guardians answered "yes." They each indicated that students should know about their disability and how the disability affects their life.

When I asked: What do you think about your child learning about his/her disability at school? They all supported disability education at school. Letha said "I wish they would teach him about it. I try, but can't really help because I don't understand myself." As she was talking, Letha reached over and pulled a stack of papers out of the desk drawer beside her chair and handed them to me. "You see all this? It's all papers from the school. I tried reading it all but I can't even figure out what all this is for…How am I suppose to help him [Rufus]? It's different nowadays than it was for me…I don't know how to help him."

Ilene also liked the idea of someone at school helping Butters understand his disability. "I do the best I can but I don't feel like I have the knowledge or the right words to explain things to him about it. I tell him things but I think it would be good if he heard it from someone who was more knowledgeable." Mindy's statements were very similar to Ilene's "I talk to him and explain what I know but it would be good to have help explaining it…it would help to hear it from other people at school who know about it [autism]."

When asked to specify what students should be taught and who should teach those things at school, all women provided similar answers. They each emphasized teaching the impact one's disability would have on future employment and school. They also stated that it is important for students to learn how to compensate for the disability by focusing

on what they can do well. None of the women expressed a strong opinion regarding the title or position of the person that should teach students about their disability, but instead described the personal, of the person. All three women stated that the person must be someone who genuinely cares about the students and truly wants to teach them how to be successful, despite their disability. They also all agreed that the person must have accurate knowledge of disability and feel comfortable talking honestly to students about disabilities.

Self-advocacy. Each parent/guardian was asked to define self-advocacy. All three provided answers that emphasized their child's ability to ask for help. However, the primary focus was placed on knowing how and where to access resources. Ilene and Letha emphasized the importance of Butters and Rufus knowing the people they could go to for assistance when needed. Each of these two women referred back to earlier statements regarding their age and a concern for their grandchild's wellbeing once the women were gone. Letha stated, "he has people around that help him like me but he needs to know who can help him more if he needs school help or for finding jobs." Ilene's statements support a similar feeling "I am here to help Butters but I know there's people whose job it is to help kid's who have a hard time with things….I know there's people who can answer questions or get help for him when he goes to college or needs help finding a job…I just don't always know how to find those people."

Mindy also identified self-advocacy as important, but felt Kyle's disability made self-advocacy different for him than it is for many students. " I want him to know how to ask for help but he doesn't necessarily think he needs help with the things I think he needs help with." Mindy then talked in length about the close relationship Kyle has with

her and his grandfather. She explained her future plans for Kyle, which include him continuing to live in her home after his high school graduation. Mindy talked about her fear that people will judge or take advantage of Kyle because of his disability and the role that fear played in making the decision about her son's future living arrangements.

To close each interview, I asked each of the women to describe how they envision their child's life ten years in the future. Next, I asked how self-advocacy and disability awareness might affect their child's ability to achieve the vision they have for him.

Letha said " I hope he is happy! I'd like to see him have a job that he's good at and allows him to support himself." Regarding self-advocacy and self-awareness, she recognized the importance of both in Rufus's future, but stated that finding the right job is the most important thing to ensure a good future. "Yes, those [self-advocacy and self-awareness] are important but I believe that if he picks a job that he's good at a lot of that won't be as necessary. There's lot's he's good at and he's a hard worker."

Ilene stated: " I believe he [Butters] will do well for himself. I think, if he does what he needs to, he'll finish college and find work that makes him happy…I imagine he'll live around this area because he likes it here and his family is here." Ilene placed a significant emphasis on self-advocacy and self-awareness. "Yes, both are very important. Like I said earlier, he needs to know who to go to for help but he also has to follow through with asking for help". Mindy said

> I hope that he [Kyle] can find a job…I think he would do good if we can find something like assembly work…not like the factory jobs but something that is a hands on type of task that he does over and over…He'll live in the same house we

live in now. It's setup so he can have his own living area and I don't really see him living on his own.

When asked about self-advocacy and self-awareness, she replied, "Yeah, those things are important, but you know Kyle, he has a hard time grasping what autism means for him as he gets older. So, it's like I was saying earlier, self-awareness or self-advocacy, they might look different for him than for other people his age."

Research Question 5

The fifth and final research question of this study was: Do special education teachers find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical for classroom instruction? This question was answered using qualitative data collected during meetings with the classroom special education teacher prior to study implementation and again after all lessons had been taught, informal conversations across the span of the study, conversations following each of the seven instructional fidelity checks, and observations of Ms. Dynamite's interactions with students during lesson activities. Findings are presented in one of two categories: usefulness or practicality. Overall, Ms. Dynamite repeatedly stated or conveyed that the lessons were useful and practical.

Usefulness. On several occasions Ms. Dynamite expressed her belief that the information taught in the lessons is useful for teachers and students. "I believe it is important for them [students] to learn about their disability. I usually teach my students about disabilities during class at the beginning of the year." During our seven conversations regarding instructional fidelity checks, Mr. Dynamite and I discussed the lesson structure and content. During our conversations, Ms. Dynamite stated that the lessons were "awesome" and the lesson structure made them "easy to use, even without

having a lot of time to plan". She indicated that the lessons were something she could use in the future because of both the content and structure of the lessons.

Throughout the study, Ms. Dynamite often interacted with the students as they completed lesson activities. Several times during the study, she commented on the activities being "good for them [students]." She especially liked the lessons about student rights and responsibilities and the creation and presentation of the research projects. Regarding the rights and responsibilities lessons, she stated,

> this is good information for them to learn…They have to know that when they leave here [high school] no one is going to ask them if they need help. They are going to have to figure things out on their own.

Practicability. While discussing disability education, Ms. Dynamite expressed the challenge of having time and resources to teach students about their individual disability.

> …once the school year really starts going it's really difficult to find time to teach this information, especially to our students who are required to take EOI's (End of Instruction Exams) and those who don't have class in a resource room. I work hard to make sure my students cover the content covered in the regular English class plus try to help them with the things they each struggle with. There's just not time for anything else.

Throughout the study, I observed Ms. Dynamite diligently work to ensure her students kept up with novel reading aligned with the general education English curriculum, she worked with students to stay current on core subject class assignments, provided students helpful writing resources, and completed lessons to help improve

students' writing skills. In addition to these tasks taking place in her classroom, Ms. Dynamite co-taught one period each day, maintained special education paperwork, conducted special education meetings on a regular basis, and collaborated with the general education teachers of each student on her special education caseload. Observing her daily routine and dedication to her students underscored the need for the *ME!* lessons to be useful and easy to include in classrooms.

The structure of the lessons, inclusion of the PASS standards, and activities aligned with the PASS standards, increases the practicability of the lessons and likelihood of busy teachers like Ms. Dynamite using the lessons. During our initial meeting, Ms. Dynamite indicated that inclusion of the PASS standards was important if teaching the lessons would take a significant amount of class time. She also liked that the research project could be used to fulfill writing requirements in her classroom.

> the PASS skills and writing assignments would be great to have. I like to teach this information and I have a PowerPoint about disabilities that I use but I would like to have more resources to use with my students. Finding time to come up with quality activities to do in class…realistically, that's not always an option. I would have to decide what I was not going to get done in order to have time to put toward this [patting the book of *ME!* lessons].

Finding appropriate resources to teach adolescents about their disabilities is also a challenge. When I asked Ms. Dynamite about the resources she had in her room for teaching students about their disabilities, she showed me several books and also indicated the internet as a resource. Most of the books were textbooks from her university classes along with several chapter books. The chapter books, while helpful, focused on topics

such as bullying or novels that included a character with a disability and not books that had disability information written for the purpose of teaching adolescents specific disability related information.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

This chapter provides an overview and discussion of this study and findings. I begin by briefly reviewing the problem and major points of the literature from chapter 2. I then describe the purpose, list the research questions, and explain why this study is important. Next, I provide an overview of the methodology, and results and discussion organized by the five research questions. As this study was completed, I made changes to the *ME!* Lessons; therefore, I also included a description of those changes and why I believe each change was necessary. Implications from this study and my personal reflections bring this chapter and dissertation to a close.

Review of Literature

Student outcomes. Students with disabilities experience less postschool success compared to students without disabilities. Unemployment rates of young adults with disabilities are at least 9% higher than unemployment rates of young nondisabled adults. Some youth, such as those with orthopedic impairments, experience unemployment rates as high as 73% (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). While the number of students with disabilities seeking higher education has increased over the last 10 years, students with disabilities are still less likely to participate in postsecondary education compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006). Additionally, as many as 75% of students with disabilities continue to live with their parents two years after exiting high school. While this number is similar to that of youth without disabilities, as many as 95% of some youth, such as those with multiple disabilities, struggle to live independently four years after high school graduation

(Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine; 2005; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009).

Problem. Poor postschool outcomes for students with disabilities contributes to two significant problems. First, a lack of educational opportunities and gainful employment leads to a lack of financial independence, which then leads to a lack of independent living. This lack of independence directly impacts the quality of life people with disabilities experience as adults. Second, every student that leaves our school system without the education, opportunity, and ability to live as independently as possible places an undue financial burden on society. It is a responsibility of the education system to educate all students in a manner that allows and encourages each student to become a contributing member of society, both socially and economically, to the greatest extent possible.

Improving outcomes. A desire to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities has contributed to four decades of legislation forcing the education system to design special education practices that "facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities" (IDEA, 2004 (300.43)). As a result, much attention has been placed on improving the transition from school to postschool settings for students with disabilities. Self-determination has become a key component in preparing students for a successful transition to adult life. During the 1980's, The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) brought the idea of self-determination to the forefront of special education with an initiative that funded numerous self-determination projects. The OSERS initiative, among others, lead to the development of

definitions and frameworks for promoting self-determination in special education (Ward & Kohler, 1996; Wehmeyer, 1998).

Self-determination. Popular self-determination definitions, such as Wehmeyer's that includes "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference" (pg. 22) typically include the idea of a person making choices for themselves based on their own desires and interests. Literature in the field of special education uses numerous terms to describe SD (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Martin & Marshall, 1995; Ward, 2005; Wehmeyer, 1996). Such literature also recognizes the environment as a significant factor in the development of student self-determination (Shogren et al., 2007).

Similarly, the field of motivational psychology describes numerous theories, models, and terms related to self-determination. A well-known and accepted SD-related idea is that people want to feel competent and have control over what they do (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2000). As in the special education literature, motivational literature emphasizes personal control as a major component of self-determination theories and definitions. Both special education and motivational literature support the creation of school environments that facilitate self-determination development (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2001; Shogren et al., 2007; White, 1959).

As a result of the self-determination movement in special education, various materials exist for classroom use by teachers of students with disabilities. Many of the materials developed for the purpose of increasing student SD were described in chapter 2. While each of the materials addresses various self-determination components, none

primarily emphasize students learning about their disability. Students need to have a realistic and accurate understanding of their disability and its impact on their life if they are to effectively carry out self-determined behaviors in and outside of school. It is this need that inspired the development of the *ME!* lessons.

Study purpose and questions. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the *ME!* Lessons when used with high school students with disabilities. To achieve this, the research questions for this study focused on student skills and behaviors, parent perceptions of self-awareness and self-advocacy education, and student and teacher perceptions of the *ME!* lessons. The research questions include: (a) Do the *ME!* lessons increase student knowledge about individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (b) Do the *ME!* Lessons increase student expression of personal knowledge regarding individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (c) Do high school students value learning about personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? (d) Do parents value their students learning about his/her personal disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy?, and (e) Do special education teachers find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical for classroom instruction?

Importance of this study. An overarching theme in special education literature is increasing students' self-determination knowledge and skills as a means for improving postschool outcomes. A crucial part of increasing self-determination skills and knowledge is providing students with the knowledge and opportunity to understand and practice self-awareness and self-advocacy. Despite this need, many existing self-determination curricula fail to specifically teach students about their personal disability.

Additionally, self-advocacy opportunities provided to special education students tend to focus on IEP meeting participation. While the IEP meeting is a logical place to ask students to practice self-advocacy skills, it is only one of several opportunities for students to voice their opinions and interests.

I believe one of the most important aspects of this study is learning how educators can effectively teach students the knowledge and skills needed to confidently participate in numerous self-advocacy opportunities, one of those being the IEP meeting. I also believe that seeking ways to include parents and guardians in the process is a powerful tool for improving self-determination education. I hope that by completing this dissertation study and continuing to follow study participants over the next several years, I can provide data that may potentially improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Study Overview

Setting. This study took place at a semi rural high school located in central Oklahoma. The high school serves approximately 1100 ninth through 12th grade students and operates on a block schedule, consisting of four 85-minute class periods and two staggered lunch periods each day.

Participants. This study included 13 participants, which included one special education teacher, six student participants, and six parents/guardians, three of which participated in a parent/guardian interview. The six student participants included four males and two females who were all age 15 at the beginning of this study. The six student participants attended a third period resource special education classroom for English nine and were receiving special education services due to a previous disability diagnosis.

The parent/guardian participants involved in this study included three mothers, one aunt, and two grandmothers. The special education teacher has a bachelor's degree in special education, a master's degree in education, and is a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). At the time of this study, she had taught special education for 12 years and was teaching ninth and 10th grade English in the special education resource room and co-teaching in the general education English classroom.

Design. I used a small–n design called the multi-element baseline design with repeated measures (Hains & Baer, 1989) to address research questions one and two, and a phenomenological approach to answer questions three, four and five. Having both quantitative and qualitative data allowed me to provide meaningful answers for all five of my research study questions while also giving voice to the participants who represent the people this study is ultimately meant to benefit most.

Intervention. The intervention used in this study is a recently developed instructional program called *ME! Lessons to Teach Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy* (Cantley, Little, & Martin, 2010) designed to teach students self-awareness and self-advocacy knowledge and skills. The program includes 10 units, which contain two to four lessons per unit. Each lesson takes approximately 45 to 60 minutes to teach for a total of approximately 17 to 23 hours of class time needed to move through the entire set of lessons. The *ME!* lessons teach students to understand their disability and abilities, rights and responsibilities, and self-advocacy skills.

At the time of this study, the 10 units in the *ME!* lessons included (1) Getting Started, (2) Learning About Special Education, (3) Understanding My Individualized Education Program, (4) Understanding My Rights and Responsibilities, (5)

Communicating About My Disability and Needs, (6) Advocating For My Needs in High School, (7) Advocating For My Needs After High School, (8) Developing My Resources, (9) My Abilities and Disabilities Project, and (10) Putting It All Together.

Type of data collected. The data collected during this study included both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative dependent measures included five permanent products of the *ME!* lessons: (a) percent of correct responses on unit knowledge quizzes 1-9, (b) number of identified problems and solutions on critical thinking activities for units 3-8, (c) rubric scores from self-advocacy tasks, (d) scores of the *ME!* Scale, and (e) percentage of Summary of Performance items completed correctly. Qualitative data included pre and post student focus group interviews, three parent/guardian interviews, meetings, observations, and interviews with the special education teacher.

Findings and Interpretations

Summarized study results are described here as related to each research question. Results indicate that all student participants did improve self-determination knowledge and their expression of that knowledge across the span of this study. Parent participants indicated that the lesson content was valuable and helpful. The special education teacher indicated that the lessons are useful and practical.

Question 1. The first research question of this study was: Do the *ME!* Lessons increase student knowledge about individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? Overall, the results of the student participants indicate that the *ME!* lessons had a positive affect on their ability to identify and describe their disability, needs, strengths, and demonstrate basic self-advocacy skills. Knowledge quiz scores for

the group increased by 21 percentage points from a pre mean of 54% to a post mean of 75% and the mean score for the Unit 10 comprehensive final was 75%. Grand PND effect size for knowledge quizzes 1-9 was .8, which suggests this was a moderately effective intervention for the group. The *ME!* Scale scores support an increase in student personal knowledge with an overall group increase of 53% in the number of "yes" responses from 39% to 92%. While the SOP scores remained low, the group mean increased by 21%, from a pre mean of 11% to a post mean of 32% across the span of this study.

Overall, the results for the first research questions were what I expected. Prior to the intervention students displayed some basic knowledge about special education and disability, but seemed to be disconnected or confused about their special education placement and disability label. This confusion and disconnect decreased as students learned about special education processes and purposes, and their personal IEP's and disability. I was disappointed with the post score on the SOP. While I had expected low pre scores I believed that most or all students would have exhibited greater improvement by intervention completion. Students lost a significant amount of points on the pre and post SOP for leaving items blank. I believe students left questions blank for two reasons. First, the structure and wording of the form is unappealing to students. Second, the questions left blank required students to specifically identify accommodations and supports they find useful at school, which is difficult for many students. As I result of this I chose to replace the SOP document with a newly formatted document called A Summary of My Performance and Goals (see Appendix M). The new version of the document includes the same basic information as the original SOP but the document

layout and wording was changed in hopes of increasing student interest in future document completion.

Question 2. The second research question was: Do the *ME!* Lessons increase student expression of their knowledge regarding individual disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? According to the results of the critical thinking activities, students did increase their overall ability and/or willingness to discuss issues directly related to disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy. The number of student identified problems increased by seven and the number of student-identified solutions increased by six across the seven critical thinking activities. Additionally, during the post critical thinking activities, students displayed a broader awareness of their personal rights, responsibilities, communication skills, resources, and disability disclosure. Both the self-advocacy task and final presentation gave students the opportunity to put their new knowledge into action. All students displayed the ability to appropriately request accommodations, identify and describe personal goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Five of the six participants displayed the ability to identify and describe their disability accurately.

I had expected students to participate and enjoy the critical thinking activities because they provided students an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and opinions without requiring them to read or provide written responses. Throughout the study each of the students participated in each critical thinking activity. I was concerned about the PowerPoint presentation requirement. I believed students would be nervous and reluctant about a presentation that required them to discuss their personal disability in front of peers. However, the performance of all six of the student participants proved my concern

unnecessary. I was extraordinarily impressed with the clarity, confidence and thought displayed by each of the six students as they stood in front of their peers and discussed their disability, and hopes and dreams for the future. The student PowerPoint presentations were the most memorable and meaningful to me of all the study activities.

Question 3. The third research question was: Do high school students value learning about their disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? All students participated in both pre and post focus groups and expressed their opinion regarding the importance of students learning about their disability, strengths, weaknesses, and learning how to self-advocate. Kyle was the only student that did not express his opinion regarding student education on strengths, weaknesses, and self-advocacy during the interview. Field notes regarding student behaviors, actions, and comments across the span of the study also support that five of the six students value learning about personal disability, needs, interests, and self-advocacy.

Question 4. The fourth research question was: Do parents value their students learning about his/her disability, needs, strengths, interests, and self-advocacy? Results from three parent interviews indicated that all parent/guardians value their child learning about his/her disability, needs, strengths, interests and self-advocacy. All three interviewed parent/guardian participants placed significant value on the ability of their child to realistically assess their personal strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, each of the interviewed parent/guardian participants placed great value on the ability of their child to understand their disability and strengths and weaknesses. During the interviews, parents and guardians expressed concern regarding their ability to help their child learn

accurate disability information and questioned how having a disability would influence future education and job opportunities for their child.

Question 5. The final research question was: Do special education teachers find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical for classroom instruction? During the initial interview, prior to intervention implementation, Ms. Dynamite expressed her belief that the lessons and materials were practical for use in the special education resource classroom. Across the span of the study, she also made statements that supported her initial response regarding the use and practicality of the lessons and materials. She indicated that the structure of the lessons, inclusion of the PASS standards, and activities aligned with the PASS standards increases the likeness that busy teachers like herself, would use the lessons in the classroom.

Curriculum Development

During this study, I identified specific aspects in the *ME!* lessons that I believed needed to change in an effort to make the lessons more effective and/or to make the teaching and presentation of information more seamless. Each change I made during the study is described in the following paragraphs.

Three unit titles were changed to portray a more accurate label based on the content and activities included in that specific unit and to remove focus on the term "disability". Unit 5, Communicating About My Disability and Needs, was changed to Improving My Communication Skills; Unit 9 My Abilities and Disabilities Project, was changed to Increasing My Self-Awareness; and Unit 10 Putting It All Together, was changed to Assessing My Progress and Portfolio.

The language used in units including critical thinking activities was updated to reflect more consistent wording in the critical thinking instructions across all units. Other minor wording changes were made throughout the lessons to correct spelling and grammar errors as needed. A more significant change was the replacement of the SOP document with a newly formatted document called A Summary of My Performance and Goals (see Appendix M). The new version of the document includes the same basic information as the original SOP but the document layout and wording was changed in hopes of increasing student interest in document completion.

The final change in the curriculum was the reordering of the units. The original order of the lessons required students to complete a research project during unit 3 that requires each student to recognize their disability diagnosis and research their specific disability. As part of this unit, students research their disability and describe its impact on their life. During unit two instruction of this study, I made the decision to rearrange the order of the units, resulting in the original unit 3 (My Disability Awareness Project) becoming unit 9. I also changed the unit title to My Abilities and Disabilities Project, in an effort to emphasize each student's abilities as well as their disability.

The change in unit order served me well during this study as it provided me additional time to build trusting relationships with each student participant and allowed me to become familiar with each student's personal circumstances. As a result, I felt more confident in my ability to candidly answer each of their questions regarding their personal IEP's, disability, and strengths and weaknesses. However, following study completion, I had time to reflect on the experience and initial study findings. After doing so, I realized that students would benefit by completing the self-awareness project prior

to beginning the lessons that focus on advocacy during and after high school. Therefore, I again moved the unit requiring students to research their disabilities, this time from unit 9 to unit 6. Each of the changes described here resulted in the following unit order and title wording: (1) Getting Started, (2) Learning About Special Education, (3) Understanding My Individualized Education Program, (4) Understanding My Rights and Responsibilities, (5) Improving My Communication Skills, (6) Increasing My Self-Awareness, (7) Advocating For My Needs in High School, (8) Advocating For My Needs After High School, (9) Developing My Resources, and (10) Assessing My Progress and Portfolio. All of the updated units are available for free download at http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/trasition-education-materials/me-lessons-for-teaching-self-awareness-and-self-advocacy.html.

Researcher Reflections

During this study and after its completion I often found myself thinking "I wish I would have thought about that" or "I wonder if...". This section discusses some of those issues and attempts to provide helpful information for researchers or educators interested in using the *ME!* lessons in the future. I begin by describing some issues special education teachers might encounter and provide some recommendations for planning for such issues. I then describe things I wish I had done differently from a researchers perspective and close with some brief personal thoughts regarding current special education literature.

My recommendations to sped teachers. Across the span of this study and after data analysis several issues stood out to me as challenges that need consideration when

using this curriculum in a classroom. Those issues are described in four categories: teachers, parents, students, and resources.

Teachers. As discussed in chapter 2, it is crucial that education professionals view self-determination as a developmental process, not simply as an add-on curriculum taught during high school. A significant part of this developmental process is providing students opportunities to practice self-determined behaviors, such as self-advocacy. Educators must be willing to work with students and fellow educators to ensure each student has such opportunities available to them during the *ME!* lessons. For example, the self-advocacy task taught during unit 7 requires students to request accommodations from a general education teacher and then obtain feedback from that teacher regarding student performance. However, having each student organize and complete the self-advocacy task may be more difficult than one might think. The nature of many schools and classrooms and attitudes of some teachers fail to encourage self-determined behaviors of students. In many circumstance's general education and special education teachers have collaborated on student accommodations with little or no feedback from students. Therefore, requiring students to complete the self-advocacy task might require many educators to reevaluate their current method of student involvement in the accommodation process. Collaboration between special and general educators is necessary for students to practice self-advocacy skills such as those in unit 7.

In addition to collaborating with general education teachers, special education teachers should plan for three specific issues in their classroom while teaching the *ME!* lessons. First, many students do not know the disability label placed upon them during the special education eligibility process. Students with more stigmatizing labels, such as

emotional disturbance, may experience embarrassment or anger when learning of his/her disability label. It is important to anticipate this problem and take steps to minimize student discomfort. One possible solution might include meeting with any student, prior to lesson instruction, the teacher suspects will be upset by their disability label. During the meeting the teacher should discuss the disability label with the student and answer student questions as needed.

Second, while teaching the *ME!* lessons in the resource room, it is likely that several students will have IEP's written by other special education teachers. Teachers should review all IEP's to anticipate student questions or issues regarding the IEP's. For example, some teachers may have chosen to use the same or very similar language and statements when writing IEP's for multiple students. Therefore, it is possible that two or more students will have very similar IEP's despite very different disability labels. It is possible that students will question the similarities in their IEP's. Lastly, most high school IEP's do not include the student's disability label. Therefore, teachers should plan ahead and learn the disability label placed upon each student during the special education eligibility process prior to teaching *ME!*.

Additionally, for the *ME!* lessons to be taught as intended, educators must be or become comfortable with special education students playing a leadership role in their education. As a result, it might be necessary for some educators to receive some type of self-determination training to learn how to create classroom environments that facilitate self-determination for all students. General education teachers and special education teachers must work together to identify and develop opportunities for students to learn self-determination skills throughout their school day and beyond the special education

classroom and IEP meeting. For example, teachers could collaborate on activities such as the self-advocacy task in unit 7 or the research project in unit 6 to create opportunities for students to practice self-determined behaviors.

Parents. During this study, I sought to obtain parent perceptions regarding the content covered in the *ME!* lessons. During my interviews with parent participants, I became increasingly aware that parents and guardians frequently felt they lacked necessary information for helping their child learn about his/her disability and understanding the process and implications of disability disclosure in postsecondary settings. I strongly believe that including parents in the lesson content would be an extremely valuable experience for parents/guardians, students, and teachers. This could possibly be the most meaningful addition to teaching the *ME!* curriculum. I highly encourage educators to find ways to include parents by inviting them to the classroom, providing an evening session, or perhaps presenting some basic information at an open house night.

Students. A crucial piece of self-determination education is teaching students how to appropriately express their opinions and needs. During this study, I actively collected data regarding student perceptions and opinions about the activities and content of the *ME!* lessons. I believe educators can learn a great deal from listening to their students and students can benefit a great deal from sharing their thoughts and ideas. Therefore, educators should actively seek ways to obtain student opinions as a way to improve content and teaching. Since self-determination education is an ideal place for students to learn how to express their opinions appropriately, the *ME!* curriculum is a logical place to seek student feedback and encourage students to share opinions appropriately. Teachers

could accomplish this by including class discussion throughout the lessons as well as individual student meetings as appropriate.

Resources. The final challenge I believe warrants discussion is the difficulty many educators may encounter when attempting to locate appropriate sources for educating students about their personal disability. As discussed in chapter 2, many educators identify a lack of resources as a barrier to teaching self-determination (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughs, 2000). I personally experienced this problem during this study while looking for resources appropriate for educating students about their personal disability. While some helpful and appropriate resources exist, they can be difficult to locate and/or expensive to purchase. Many of the resources teachers have access to are college text books purchased while attending their teacher preparation program and/or chapter books that include a character with a disability. While helpful, these two resources are inadequate for helping students learn about their disability. Educators need access to books that explain disabilities and are written at appropriate reading levels for their special education students.

I suggest that all educators review the recommended resources list included on the *ME!* website as a way of identifying some helpful resources to use prior to beginning unit 6. During this study, I wish I had required each student to create a book about his/her disability as part of the research project. Looking back I think this would have been a great addition to the project and a helpful resource for the classroom teacher. Each student's completed book, could have been copied and kept in the classroom as a resource for future students. Each student created book, could have been added to and improved upon by future students as they complete disability research.

Things I wish I would have done differently. The field of special education has established quality standards for correlation, qualitative, experimental group, and single subject designs in special education (Gersten et al., 2005; Horner et al., 2005; Odom et al., 2005). As I designed and conducted this study, I used the qualitative and single subject design quality indicators (Gersten et al., 2005; Horner et al., 2005; Odom et al., 2005) to guide my work in hopes of conducting a powerful study. However, as I reflect on the study and data there are some things I wish I had done differently.

First, I wish I had collected at least two more baseline data points for each student to get a better representation of each student's prior knowledge. Ideally, I would have obtained a baseline data point for each of the 10 units over a several week period leading up to the intervention. Unfortunately, time limitations made it impossible for me to assess baseline on each unit, thus I opted for a sample of the lessons. I also wish I had conducted individual student interviews prior to the intervention to gain insight into baseline data results. Next, I wish I would have included parents and guardians to a greater extent via more interviews and parent sessions over the span of the study.

After much thought regarding control groups, I am undecided on the value of using one in replication of this study. As I think about this, I go back to the statement "Perhaps the true efficacy of special education would be better expressed in terms of the extent to which it helps students with disabilities to improve performance" (Haring & Lovett, 1990). My personal belief is that when conducting research or teaching the purpose should not be to compare participants with other groups. The purpose should be to determine if the intervention is valuable to participants and has a positive effect, both

short and long term, on their future. The research should answer: Is the intervention a valuable tool for helping students become contributing members of our society?

My thoughts on existing literature. Over the past five years as I have completed my doctoral program, I have become keenly aware of certain gaps in the special education literature regarding self-determination and transition outcomes for students with disabilities. First, there is a lack of longitudinal studies, almost to the point of nonexistence, that provide data supporting the use of self-determination interventions. Second, there is little focus on family opinions and feedback regarding self-determination interventions discussed in the published literature. Third, there is very little data regarding student perceptions of self-determination interventions and transition practices implemented to improve their postschool outcomes.

These three gaps leave me asking: How do we know if what we are doing really works? Do parents and students believe self-determination education is important and valuable? If so, do they agree with the manner in which schools are implementing self-determination education? Until these gaps are filled, we cannot provide sufficient answers to these questions nor claim to know the long-term effects of current self-determination education practices for special education students and their families. These questions and my awareness of these three gaps significantly impacted my planning of this study and why I made an effort to include parents and obtain student feedback.

Future research. I previously discussed three gaps in the special education literature regarding self-determination and transition education. In an effort to address those gaps, I intend to continue this research project by collecting longitudinal data from students and parents/guardians. I plan to work with and collect data from each student

participant and the interviewed parent/guardian participants for at least five years and perhaps longer. My goal is to describe how this research study might have influenced a participant's future beyond the high school special education classroom. The findings from my follow-along study will hopefully be published and help provide some information to fill the three gaps I previously discussed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the *ME!* lessons when taught to high school students in a special education resource classroom. The methodology was determined by practices deemed appropriate in published literature. While some weaknesses exist in the study, I still believe the findings and conclusions are credible based on the methodology and data analysis procedures. The combination of the qualitative and quantitative data provide specific information that describes student performance as well as data to explain why student performance and engagement differed across dependent measures and other activities across the span of this study. By providing data from students and parents/guardians, I hope to provide a greater understanding of what they value in self-determination education. Including data regarding teacher opinions and perceptions also helped determine that special education teachers will likely find the *ME!* lessons useful and practical. I also hope that by continuing this study I will eventually provide meaningful longitudinal data describing the impact of the *ME!* lessons on students beyond the high school setting.

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APPENDIX A
Sample Lesson Plan
Unit 1: Getting Started

Unit 1: Getting Started

Lesson Overviews

Unit Purpose: The purpose of Unit 1 is to familiarize students with the concepts of self-awareness and self-advocacy, provide students opportunities to identify and discuss their strengths and needs, and help them identify questions they have regarding self-awareness and self-advocacy. Additionally, students are introduced to the KWL chart and the ME! Book, both of which are used throughout the remaining lessons and units.

Lesson 1: Understanding Self-Awareness & Self-Advocacy

Objectives
Students will:
1. define self-awareness and self-advocacy
2. identify examples of self-awareness and self-advocacy
3. identify personal strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes
4. use retelling skills to participate in oral presentation (Extension Activity)
5. complete the ME! Scale

Materials
1. Worksheet 1-1: Understanding Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy
2. Student ME! Scale
3. Parent/guardian YOU! Scale

Activities and Procedures: Students begin Lesson 1 by listening to and analyzing a scenario read to them by the teacher. Once students have discussed the scenario, they complete Worksheet 1-1: Understanding Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy. As they complete worksheet 1-1, students define the terms self-awareness and self-advocacy and answer a series of questions requiring them to identify personal likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses. Once students finish worksheet 1-1, they each complete a copy of the ME! Scale, which should take approximately 10 minutes. Students must also take home a copy of the YOU! Scale to be completed by a parent or guardian. Each student will need a copy of the completed YOU! Scale to use in Lesson 2.

Student Evaluation:
1. Completion of ME! Scale
2. Completed worksheet 1-1: Understanding Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy
3. Verbal participation during class discussion

Extension Activity: Lesson 1 includes one Extension Activity. For the activity, students are asked to revisit the scenario read at the beginning of Lesson 1. Students work in small groups to change the scenario by including examples of self-awareness and self-advocacy. Each

group shares their story aloud once it is completed. This activity takes approximately 15-30 to complete.

Lesson 2: Understanding What It's all About

Objectives
Students will:
1. compare ME! and YOU! Scales
2. identify similarities and differences on the ME! and YOU! Scales
3. develop strategies to improve scores on ME! and YOU! Scales
4. add to KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart

Materials
1. Completed ME! and YOU! Scales (from Lesson 1)
2. Worksheet 1-2: My Improvement Plan
3. Three ring binder for each student
4. Eight tabbed dividers for each student
5. Three hole punch
6. ME! Book Instructions and Table of Contents
7. Markers, paper, etc for students to decorate ME! Book cover
8. Unit 1 Knowledge Quiz

Activities and Procedures: Before beginning Lesson 2, students need their completed worksheet 1-1, their ME! Scale, and YOU! Scale from Lesson 1. Lesson 2 begins with a review of the terms self-awareness and self-advocacy. Next, students compare the results of the two scales and use that information to complete worksheet 1-2: My Improvement Plan. Once students complete their worksheet, they begin assembling their ME! Book using the instructions and table of contents provided with the lesson materials. Next, students are introduced to the KWL chart, which is completed as a class. It is important to model the KWL procedure for students during Lesson 2, prior to introducing the individual KWL chart in Unit 2. As a closing activity each student completes the Unit 1 Knowledge Quiz.

Student Evaluation:
1. Participation during group work
2. Completed Unit 1-2 Worksheet: My Improvements Plan
3. Verbal participation during class discussion
4. Completion of written story (Extension Activity)
5. Unit 1 Knowledge Quiz

Extension Activity: Lesson 2 Extension Activity requires students to work in small groups to develop a story based on 11 guiding questions. Next, each group shares aloud the completed story as a way to facilitate discussion about self-advocacy and self-awareness. The time required to complete this activity varies based on the number of students in your class and the extent to which you require groups to write the story. This activity should take a minimum of 30 minutes.

Unit 1: Getting Started

PASS STANDARDS

- High School Language Arts (Grades 9, 10, 11, & 12) -

Reading/Literature: The student will apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, appreciate, and respond to a wide variety of texts.
Standard 1: Vocabulary - The student will expand vocabulary through word study, literature, and class discussion.

Writing/Grammar/Usage and Mechanics: The student will express ideas effectively in written modes for a variety of purposes and audiences.
Standard 1: Writing Process - The student will use the writing process to write coherently.

1. Use a writing process to develop and refine composition skills. Students are expected to:
    a. use prewriting strategies to generate ideas such as brainstorming, using graphic organizers, keeping notes and logs.

Standard 2: Modes and Forms of Writing - The student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.

1. Write biographical or autobiographical narratives or short stories that:
    a. narrate a sequence of events and communicate their significance to the audience.

Standard 3: Grammar/Usage and Mechanics - The student will demonstrate appropriate practices in writing by applying grammatical knowledge to the revising and editing stages of writing. Participate independently and in groups to create oral presentations.

1. Standard English Usage - Demonstrate correct use of Standard English in speaking and writing.
    a. Distinguish commonly confused words (e.g., there, their, they're; two, too, to; accept, except; affect, effect).
    b. Use correct verb forms and tenses.
    c. Use correct subject-verb agreement.
    d. Distinguish active and passive voice.
    e. Use correct pronoun/antecedent agreement and clear pronoun reference.
    f. Use correct forms of comparative and superlative adjectives.
2. Mechanics and Spelling - Demonstrate appropriate language mechanics in writing.
    a. Demonstrate correct use of capitals.
    b. Use correct formation of plurals.
    c. Demonstrate correct use of punctuation and recognize its effect on sentence structure.
    d. Distinguish correct spelling of commonly misspelled words and homonyms.
3. Sentence Structure - Demonstrate appropriate sentence structure in writing.
    a. Use parallel structure.
    b. Correct dangling and misplaced modifiers.

c. Correct run-on sentences.
d. Correct fragments.

Oral Language/Listening and Speaking - The student will demonstrate thinking skills in listening and speaking.

Standard 1: Listening - The student will listen for information and for pleasure.

1. Focus attention on the speaker's message.
2. Use knowledge of language and develop vocabulary to accurately interpret the speaker's message.
3. Listen and respond appropriately to presentations and performances of peers' or published works such as original essays or narratives, interpretations of poetry, and individual or group performances.
4. Monitor speaker's message and clarity and understanding to formulate and provide effective verbal and nonverbal feedback.
5. Use feedback to evaluate own effectiveness and set goals for future presentations.

Standard 2: Speaking - The student will express ideas and opinions in group or individual situations.

1. Use formal, informal, standard, and technical language effectively to meet the needs of purpose, audience, occasion, and task.
2. Prepare, organize, and present a variety of informative messages effectively.
3. Analyze purpose, audience, and occasion to choose effective verbal and nonverbal strategies, such as pitch and tone of voice, posture, and eye contact.
4. Ask clear questions for a variety of purposes and respond appropriately to the questions of others.

Lesson 1
Understanding Self-Awareness & Self-Advocacy

TIME: 45-60 minutes

OBJECTIVES
Students will:
1. define self-awareness and self-advocacy
2. identify examples of self-awareness and self-advocacy
3. identify personal strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes
4. use retelling skills to participate in oral presentation (Extension Activity)
5. complete the ME! Scale

MATERIALS
1. Worksheet 1-1: Understanding Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy
2. Student ME! Scale
3. Parent/guardian YOU! Scale

LESSON OPENING
Read the following scenario to the class. This scenario is included on the back of worksheet 1-1, for reference as needed by students throughout Unit 1.

I will read you a short story about a high school student named Mike. Listen carefully while I read the story. Listen for situations in the story that are similar or different from your experiences.

Mike is a 17-year-old high school student who has a learning disability. He attends the general education classroom for all classes except English. He has always had a difficult time with spelling, reading and writing legibly. He attends Ms. Jones special education classroom for English. Mike has heard his teachers and mom talk about his IEP, but he is not sure what an IEP is and has never been interested enough to ask. He also knows that his mom comes to the school at least once a year for an IEP meeting. Last year, his special education teacher invited Mike to the meeting, but he hated the idea of sitting around a table with all his teachers while they talked about him.

When Mike takes a test for history or science class, he usually goes to the special education classroom to have Ms. Jones read the test to him. Most of the time he does not have to answer all of the questions, just the ones Ms. Jones or his classroom teacher has circled on the test. He rarely is required to answer the essay questions on tests. When he finishes his test, Ms. Jones puts it in a large envelope and places it in her desk. The only time Mike sees his test again is if he did poorly on it and needs to make corrections. Mike does not

understand who decided he would take his tests this way but he likes the routine because in makes it easier for him to pass his tests.

Mike will be a senior next year and is looking forward to graduation. He plans to attend a local college after graduation and believes he should do well since he has always earned passing grades in his classes.

Discussion point(s):

- Ask students to think about Mike's situation. Specifically, his classes, tests, and assignments.
    - *Is there anything in Mike's story that you can relate to your life?*
    - *What, if anything do you have in common with Mike?*
- Provide students with 1 to 2 minutes to think about the questions you asked.
- Provide students an opportunity to share their thoughts if they wish to do so.
- Move on to the procedure below.

PROCEDURE

1. Students participate in class discussion about the meaning of "self-awareness" and "self-advocacy" and complete worksheet 1-1.

Handout: Distribute worksheet 1-1: Understanding Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy to each student.

- Write the word "self-awareness" on the board in front of the classroom.
- Ask students what they think "self-awareness" means and provide them an opportunity to respond.

    - *The word "self" means "me" and the word "awareness" means to know something, to be informed of something.*

    - *"Self-awareness" refers to a person knowing about himself or herself.*

    - *Take a minute to write the meaning of self-awareness on your worksheet.*

    - *Take a minute to think of answers to the following questions:*
        - *What are some things you do well?*
        - *What are some things you need to improve?*
        - *What are things you enjoy doing? Why do you like these things?*
        - *What are things you dislike doing? Why do you dislike these things?*
        - *What is important to you? Why?*

    - *Each of these questions are listed on your worksheet. Please take a minute to write down answers to each of these questions.*

- Provide students time to answer the questions on their paper.

- Have a few students share their answers aloud.
    - *These questions are about basic information you need to know about yourself in order to be self-aware.*

- Write the word "Self-advocacy" on the board in front of the classroom.

- Ask students what they think "Self-advocacy" means and provide them an opportunity to respond.
    - *Self-advocacy refers to a person making a deliberate or purposeful effort to speak up for his/her needs or ideas.*
    - *Take a minute to write the meaning of self-advocacy on your worksheet.*

Discussion point(s): Read and discuss the following scenario about Lucy and self-advocacy.

- *The following story about Lucy is a good example of self-advocacy. Listen while I read. Try to identify how Lucy self-advocates during the story.*
- *Lucy is a high school student who wears contacts. Even though she wears contacts, she cannot see small things from far away. When Lucy arrived to Algebra class on Monday, her teacher had made a new seating chart that left Lucy sitting at the back of the room. Lucy stayed after class to explain to her teacher that she needed to sit closer to the front because she could not see the board even when she wears her contacts.*

Use the following questions to guide a class discussion about the scenario.

- Why was it important for Lucy to speak up for herself?
- Do you think Lucy did the right thing?
- Have you ever been in a situation that you needed something changed in order to do your best? If so, did you speak up for yourself?
- Was it difficult for you to speak up for yourself? Explain.
- What would you have done in Lucy's situation?
- How could Lucy's actions in this situation impact her future?

Discussion point(s): Communication Skills

- *It is important to always use appropriate communication skills when advocating. If you are rude or belligerent, people will likely not listen to you. You must be able to explain why your need is important. If you cannot explain your need, you cannot expect the other person to understand why it is important. This applies to school, work and all other aspects of life. We will talk more about how to communicate effectively in Unit 5. I want you to spend some time between now and then thinking about the way you communicate with others. Think about your*

tone of voice, facial expression, body language, the words you use, and your level of self-confidence when talking to others.

Extension Activity: Use the following questions to guide a class discussion about "self-awareness" and "self-advocacy."

- *Think about Mike! Are there any examples of "self-awareness" in his story?*
- *Are there any examples of "self-advocacy" in his story?*

After discussing the above questions, have students split into small groups and change Mike's story to include examples of self-awareness and self-advocacy. Remind students that a copy of Mike's story is on the back of their worksheet for reference if needed. There is also space on the paper for students to make notes about how they will change the story.

- Provide each small group time and opportunity to share their story about Mike.

Discussion point(s): Guide students to the table on worksheet 1-1. Have students brainstorm ideas about when and where they might have to self-advocate.

- *Let's make a list of places or situations you might need to advocate for yourself.* (Have students answer aloud while you write answers on overhead, chart paper, or dry erase board.)
- *Can you advocate for yourself if you lack self-awareness? Why or why not?*
- *Choose an example from the list of places/situations you identified. Tell me something you might need to know about yourself to advocate in that situation.* (Have students answer aloud while you write answers on overhead, chart paper, or dry erase board.)

After classroom discussion is complete, have each student write the information you wrote on overhead, chart paper, or dry erase board on their individual worksheets. Students may also provide their own examples if they prefer. There is a table to copy five of the items onto their worksheet. Have students turn in their completed worksheets for grading.

2. Students complete ME! Scale.

Handout: Give each student a copy of the ME! Scale. It should typically take students five to ten minutes to complete the scale.

- *I am giving each of you a copy of the ME! Scale. This is not a test, but is an important tool that you will use to learn about yourself. Take a few minutes to answer all of the questions listed. Again, this is not a test, but it is very important that you answer all of the questions to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers, just answers that are true for you.*

- Provide students with an opportunity to share their answers or ask questions about the ME! Scale.

- Have students turn in the completed ME! Scale.

- Distribute the YOU! Scale to each student.

  - *Take this sheet home and have your parent/guardian answer each of the questions about you. Bring the completed sheet back to class with you tomorrow. You will need the answers from this sheet to help you with our next activity. Just like on the sheet you completed, it is very important that all questions are answered. There are no right or wrong answers, just answers that your parent/guardian feel best describe you. You will not have to share the answers with the class. This could be a good opportunity for you to talk to your parent/guardian about things you need to work on and the things you do well.*

LESSON CLOSURE
Discussion point(s): Have students define self-awareness and self-advocacy aloud.

- *"Self-awareness" refers to a person knowing about himself or herself. Things you do well. Things you need to improve. Things you enjoy doing. Things you dislike doing.*

- *"Self-advocacy" refers to a person making a deliberate or purposeful effort to speak up for his/her needs or ideas.*

- Ask students to identify aloud times and places that self-awareness and self-advocacy are necessary. Refer students to the table on worksheet 1-1 if they have difficulty providing examples.

  - *Over the next few weeks we will be working on activities to help you increase your self-awareness and help you become an effective self-advocate.*

- Remind student to bring the completed YOU! Scale back to class before the next lesson.

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Completion of ME! Scale
2. Completed worksheet 1-1: Understanding Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy
3. Verbal participation during class discussion

Lesson 2
Understanding What It's All About

TIME: 45-60 minutes

OBJECTIVES
Students will:
1. compare ME! and YOU! Scales
2. identify similarities and differences on the ME! and YOU! Scales
3. develop strategies to improve scores on ME! and YOU! Scales
4. add to KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart

MATERIALS
1. Completed ME! and YOU! Scales
2. Worksheet 1-2: My Improvement Plan
3. Three ring binder for each student
4. Eight tabbed dividers for each student
5. Three hole punch
6. ME! Book Instructions and Table of Contents
7. Markers, paper, etc for student to decorate ME! Book cover
8. Unit 1 Knowledge Quiz

LESSON OPENING
- Review the meaning of "self-awareness" and "self-advocacy" covered during the last lesson.
    - *"Self-awareness" refers to a person knowing about himself or herself. Things you do well. Things you need to work on improving. Things you enjoy doing. Things you dislike doing.*
    - *"Self-advocacy" refers to a person making a deliberate or purposeful effort to speak up for his/her needs or ideas.*
    - *Identify a place and time that self-awareness knowledge and self-advocacy skills could be helpful. Think about some of the answers we brainstormed during our last lesson. Look back at worksheet 1-1 if you need some help thinking of an answer.*
- Provide students 2-3 minutes to respond verbally to this question.

- *Today we are going to talk a little more about self-advocacy and self-awareness. We are going to start by comparing your ME! and YOU! Scales.*

PROCEDURES
1. Students compare the completed ME! and YOU! Scales

Handout: Distribute completed *ME! Scales* from the last class and have students take out their completed *YOU! Scale*.

- *Everyone take out the completed YOU! Scale from your parent/guardian.*
- *I want you to take a minute to read over the answers on the YOU! Scale.*
  - Provide students 2-3 minutes to read the answers.
    - *Now take a minute to read the answers you wrote on your ME! Scale during our last lesson.*
  - Provide students 2-3 minutes to read the answers.
    - *Now put both of the scales next to each other and compare the answers.*
    - *What are some answers on your ME! Scale that are the same as the answers on your YOU! Scale?*
    - *What are some answers on your ME! Scale that are different to the answers on your YOU! Scale?*
    - *Find three items on the scales that you would like to have a different answer to. Circle each of those items. Your three answers can come from the YOU! Scale or the ME! Scale, or a combination of both scales.*
  - Provide time and opportunity for students to discuss the items they chose and why they want different answers for those items.

2. **Handout:** Distribute worksheet 1-2: My Improvement Plan to each student to complete.
   - Go over instructions with the students. *(see teacher edition (TE) of worksheet)*
   - Provide time for students to complete the worksheet.
   - Provide an opportunity for students to share their answers if they wish.
   - Have students turn in completed worksheet 1-2 for grading.

3. Handout: Distribute a copy of the ME! Book Instructions and Table of Contents to each student.

- Go over instructions with the students.
- Provide time for each student to organize his/her ME! Book.

Extension Activity: Students work in small groups to create stories based on personal experiences.

- Divide students into groups of 2-5 depending on number of students and space available for group work.
- Distribute graded worksheets 1-1 from lesson 1. Students may use their answers and Mike's story on the back as a guide while writing their story.
- Instruct each group to create a story about their experiences at school.
    - *For this activity each group will create one story about a student. You may choose one person in your group to write the story about or you may each contribute your experiences and combine those experiences into a story about one character. You need to discuss your experiences with your group before you make a decision about how to write your story.*

Guiding Questions: Provide each group with a copy of the following questions to help guide them as they create their story.

1. What is your character's name?
2. What grade is he/she in and how old are they?
3. What does your character struggle with most at school?
4. What is your character doing to improve in the areas he/she struggles with?
5. Does your character attend class in the lab/resource room? If so, for what subject(s)?
6. Does your character take tests in the lab/resource room?
7. What are some things your character does well?
8. Give an example of when and how your character uses self-advocacy.
9. What are your characters plans after high school graduation?
10. You can also add information to your story as your group sees necessary.
11. You may also create a picture of your character.

Once students have completed their stories, have each group share their story aloud. Ask students to identify parts of the story in which the character displays good examples of self-advocacy and/or self-awareness. Discuss the different examples students described as post-high school graduation plans. Have each group hand in their written story.

4. Introduce KWL chart to class. See *Using A KWL Chart* for more information on KWL charts if needed.

- Explain to students that the class will use a KWL chart to keep track of what is learned and what will be learned as the class covers self-awareness and self-advocacy.
- Draw a KWL chart on the board, overhead, or chart paper.
- Have students work as a class to list everything they know about self-awareness and self-advocacy. List these in the K (know) column of the KWL chart.
- Have students follow the same procedure to list everything they want to know about self-awareness and self-advocacy. List these in the W (want to know) column of the class KWL chart.
- Follow the same procedure to add student input in the L (learning) column of the KWL chart.
- Explain to students that they need to review the items in the W (want to know) column at the beginning and end of each lesson to make sure they are getting answers to all of their questions.

LESSON CLOSURE
Discussion point(s): Ask students to define self-awareness and self-advocacy.

  - *"Self-awareness" refers to a person knowing about himself or herself. Things you do well. Things you need to improve. Things you enjoy doing. Things you dislike doing.*
  - *"Self-advocacy" refers to a person making a deliberate or purposeful effort to speak up for his/her needs or ideas.*

- Ask students to identify aloud times and places that self-awareness and self-advocacy are necessary or helpful.
- Remind students that the class will be using the KWL chart throughout the lessons. Encourage students to think of things to add to the chart during the next class.
- Remind students to file their completed and graded work into the correct section of their ME! Book and turn in worksheet 1-2: My Improvement Plan.

Handout: Distribute Unit 1 Knowledge Quiz for completion.

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Participation during group work
2. Completed Unit 1-2 Worksheet: My Improvements Plan
3. Verbal participation during class discussion
4. Completion of written story (Extension Activity)
5. Unit 1 Knowledge Quiz

APPENDIX B
Sample Knowledge Quiz

Unit 1: Getting Started
Checking Your Knowledge Quiz

Define the following terms using complete sentences.

1. Self-awareness: _____

   _____

2. Self-advocacy: _____

   _____

Circle the correct answer.

3. Self-awareness plays an important role in my ability to self-advocate. **True** **False**
4. My communication skills influence how well others listen to me. **True** **False**
5. Using a KWL chart can help students keep track of what they learn. **True** **False**

Provide a short answer for the following questions.

6. Identify two or more purposes of your portfolio/ME! Book. _____

   _____

   _____

7. What does KWL stand for?

   K_____

   W_____

   L_____

APPENDIX C
Critical Thinking Activity

CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES – Completed by students during in Units 3-8

UNIT 5

Critical thinking: Read the following scenario to students. Have them identify the key issues/problems and solutions.

> You have just started your first semester at the University of Oklahoma and are very excited about all of the fun things that go along with being a college student. Three weeks into the first semester you fail your History exam and do poorly on your Algebra test. You are concerned about your GPA and you know you need some accommodations on your exams. You are confused because there are no special education teachers at college and none of your professors are asking you if you need help. What do you do?

Provide students time and opportunity to respond to the story.

Prior to unit instruction students identified the following:

Problems	Solutions
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Instruct students to think about this situation as they work through unit 5. Inform students that at the end of the unit the class will revisit these problems and solutions.

Following unit instruction students identified the following:

Problems	Solutions
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPENDIX D
Self-advocacy Task Planning Worksheet

My Meeting

Student: _____ Date: _____

Subject: _____ Teacher: _____ Semester: _____

Assignment: _____

_____

Section 1: Planning For My Meeting

Y N 1. I believe the following accommodations are appropriate to ask for on this assignment.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Y N 2. I practiced explaining these accommodations verbally to a classmate.

Y N 3. I obtained feedback from my classmate about these accommodations and my explanation for needing them.

Y N 4. I made the following adjustments based on feedback from my classmate.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Y N 2. I scheduled a meeting with my teacher *(email, in person, etc)*

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Section 2: Conducting My Meeting

Y N 5. I greeted my teacher appropriately.

Y N 6. I chose to / not to disclose my disability.
Circle one

Y N 7. I described how my disability will impact my performance on this assignment.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E
ME! Scale

Student: _____ Date: _____

ME! Scale

1. I know I am in special education.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

2. I have a disability.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

3. I have an IEP.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

4. I have IEP goals.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

5. I know my IEP goals.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

6. I (or my parents) have a copy of my IEP.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

7. I know what accommodations are.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

8. I can tell my teachers about accommodations I need in class.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

9. I feel good about my future.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

10. People with disabilities go to college.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

11. I can talk about my postschool goals and dreams.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

12. I can explain to others how my disability impacts my school work.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

13. I am comfortable telling others about my disability.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

14. People with disabilities get good jobs after high school.
    a. Yes
    b. Not sure
    c. No

15. List 3 things you are good at when you are at school.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

16. List 3 things you need help with when you are at school.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

17. List 3 things you are good at when you are somewhere other than school.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

18. List 3 things you need help with when you are somewhere other than school.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

19. The most important thing in my life is:_____

_____



APPENDIX F
Summary of Performance

Summary of Performance

Student Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

Section 1 My Goals for ONE YEAR AFTER HIGH SCHOOL	
Living	**My Goal:**
	Steps to Achieving My Goal:
Learning	**My Goal:**
	Steps to Achieving My Goal:
Working	**My Goal:**
	Steps to Achieving My Goal:

Section 2 My Perceptions of My Abilities and Disabilities	
Identifying My Disability:	**My primary disability is:**
	My secondary disability is (if there is one):
My Disability's Impact:	**On my school work such as assignments, projects, tests, grades:**
	On school and/or extra-curricular activities:
	On my ability to get around independently:
Supports	**What works best, such as aids, adaptive equipment, or other services:**
	What does not work well:
Accommodations That Work for Me in High School	**Setting: (distraction-free, special lighting, adaptive furniture, etc.)**
	Timing/Scheduling: (flexible schedule, several sessions, frequent breaks, etc.)
	Response: (assistive technology, mark in book or on test, Brailler, colored overlays, dictate words to scribe, word processor, record responses, etc.)
	Presentation: (large print, Braille, assistive devices, magnifier, read or sign items, calculator, re-read directions, etc.)

APPENDIX G
Self-Advocacy Task Teacher Rubric Worksheet 7-2

Worksheet 7-2

Teacher Report

Dear: _____,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I am currently in the process of learning to advocate for myself and this meeting is an important part of my learning process. Please take a few minutes after our meeting to fill out this sheet and then return it to me. The feedback you provide is important to me and I will use it to improve my self-advocacy skills for the future.

Teacher: _____ Subject: _____ Date: _____

Assignment: _____

Student: _____

Y N 1. scheduled a meeting with me by *(email, in person, etc)* _____
Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Y N 2. greeted me appropriately when arriving for the meeting

Y N 3. chose to / not to disclose his/her disability
Circle one

Y N 4. described how his/her disability impacts him/her on this assignment

Y N 5. identified ___ accommodations that are appropriate for this assignment based on his/her needs
(#)

Y N 6. explained why each of these accommodations is important for him/her on this assignment

Y N 7. asked for my feedback on the accommodations requested

Y N 8. We came to an agreement that the following accommodations will be used on this assignment:

_____

_____

_____

Please see other side ➔

At the end of the meeting _____
(student name)

Y N 9. summarized the agreed upon accommodations aloud

Y N 10. thanked me for taking the time to meet with him/her

11. Based on this meeting, I recommend _____ make the following adjustments when asking for accommodations in the future. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX H
Summary of Performance Scoring Rubric

Scoring Rubric for Summary of Performance

Participant: _____ **Scorer:** _____

Circle one: **PRE** **POST**

Student Information *(per school/teacher)*

Graduation year: _____

Disability: _____

Domain Descriptions

Living: Refers to the type (i.e. apartment, house, etc), location (i.e. state, city, town etc) and level of independence (i.e. independent, semi-independent, etc).

Learning: Refers to post-secondary education and includes vocational, college (community, 2 year, 4 year), university, and any continuing adult education program including online and/or distance education programs.

Working: Refers to employment either part-time or full-time and includes integrated employment, supported employment, and on the job training.

Item	0	1	2	3	4	
Year of graduation	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*		Provides answer but answer is inconsistent with information on IEP		Provides answer that is consistent with school/teacher provided information	

SECTION 1: My Goals for ONE YEAR AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Living	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
My Living Goal	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides answer that is clear and detailed but is unrelated to "living" domain	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and related to "living" domain. The goal is NOT practical	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and related to "living" domain. The goal is practical	
Steps to achieving my living goal	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear, lacks detail and/or unrelated to "living" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 1-2 steps. At least one step is clearly related to "living" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 2-3 steps. At least two steps are clearly related to "living" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 3 or more steps. At least three steps are clearly related to "living" goal	
Learning	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
My Learning Goal	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides answer that is clear and detailed but is unrelated to "learning" domain	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and related to "learning" domain. The goal is NOT practical	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and related to "learning" domain. The goal is practical	
Steps to achieving my learning goal	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear, lacks detail and/or unrelated to "learning" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 1-2 steps. At least one step is clearly related to "learning" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 2-3 steps. At least two steps are clearly related to "learning" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 3 or more steps. At least three steps are clearly related to "learning" goal	
Working	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
My Working Goal	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides answer that is clear and detailed but is unrelated to "working" domain	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and related to "working" domain. The goal is NOT practical	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and related to "working" domain. The goal is practical	
Steps to achieving my working goal	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear, lacks detail and/or unrelated to "working" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 1-2 steps. At least one step is clearly related to "working" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 2-3 steps. At least two steps are clearly related to "working" goal	Provides answer that is clear, detailed and includes 3 or more steps. At least three steps are clearly related to "working" goal	

Page 1 Total _____

SECTION 2: My Perspective of My Abilities and Disabilities						
Item	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
Identifying My Disability:						
My primary disability is:	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response is inconsistent with information from IEP	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response is consistent with information from IEP	
My secondary disability is:						
My Disability's Impact:						
On my school work such as assignments, projects, tests, grades:	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 impacts.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more impacts.	
On school and/or extra-curricular activities:	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 impacts.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more impacts.	
On my ability to get around independently:	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 impacts.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more impacts.	
Supports:						
What works best, such as aids, adaptive equipment, or other services:	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 examples of supports that work.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more examples of supports that work.	
What does not work well:	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 supports that do not work.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more examples of supports that do not work.	
Accommodations That Work for Me in High School:						
Setting: (distraction-free, special lighting, adaptive furniture, etc.)	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 setting accommodations.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more setting accommodations	
Timing/Scheduling: (flexible schedule, several sessions, frequent breaks, etc.)	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 timing/scheduling accommodations.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more timing/scheduling accommodations.	
Response: (assistive technology, mark in book or on test, Brailer, colored overlays, dictate words to scribe, word processor, record responses, etc.)	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 response accommodations.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more response accommodations.	
Presentation: (large print, Braille, assistive devices, magnifier, read or sign items, calculator, re-read directions, etc.)	Provides no answer *(writes "no, nothing, na, 0, or X)*	Attempts to answer but answer is unclear and/or lacks detail	Provides response that is clear and coherent but unrelated to item	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 1-2 presentation accommodations.	Provides response that is clear, coherent and related to item. Response identifies 3 or more presentation accommodations.	
					Page 2 Total	
					Page 1 Total	
Scorer Notes:					**Total Score**	

APPENDIX I
Student Pre Lesson Focus Group Questions

Student Group Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW BEFORE INSTRUCTION WITH THE *ME!* LESSON

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I am interested in finding out your opinion about some questions I have. I will ask you several questions but please feel free to add anything you believe will contribute to this study. You may also choose to decline any of the questions you are not comfortable answering. Do you have any questions before we start?

Pre Intervention Questions

1. What things do you struggle with while you are at school?
2. How important do you think it is for you to have awareness of you strengths and weaknesses as a student? Why?
3. How important do you think it is for you to be able to ask your teachers for the support you need to be an effective student? Why?
4. How many of you know what special education is?
    - Can you explain special education to me?
5. Do you think kids with disabilities should be taught about their disability? Explain.
    - What should they be taught?
    - Who should teach it to them?
6. What do you think students with disabilities do after high school graduation?

Closing

I have asked all of the questions I had for you. Is there anything you would like to add?

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you would like to ask me about this research project?

APPENDIX J
Student Post Lesson Focus Group Questions

Student Group Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW AFTER INSTRUCTION WITH THE *ME!* LESSON

Introduction

Now that you have all spent the past few weeks learning about self-awareness and self-advocacy I would like to get your opinion about the lessons you did. I will ask you several questions but please feel free to add anything you believe will contribute to this study. You may also choose to decline any of the questions you are not comfortable answering. Do you have any questions before we start?

Post Intervention Questions

1. What things do you struggle with while you are at school?
2. How important do you think it is for you to have awareness of your strengths and weaknesses as a student? Why?
3. How important do you think it is for you to be able to ask your teachers for the support you need to be an effective student? Why?
4. How many of you know what special education is?
    - Can you explain special education to me?
5. Do you think kids with disabilities should be taught about their disability? Explain.
    - What should they be taught?
    - Who should teach it to them?
6. What do you think students with disabilities do after high school graduation?
7. What was your favorite part of the lessons during the last few weeks? Explain.
8. Was there any lessons you did not like? Explain.
9. Is there anything you believe should be added to the lessons? Explain.
10. Do you think what you learned will be helpful to you in the future? Explain.

Closing

I have asked all of the questions I had for you. Is there anything you would like to add?

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you would like to ask me about this research project?

APPENDIX K
Parent Interview Questions

Parent/Guardian Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. As you know, I am interested in finding out more about self-awareness and self-advocacy for students with disabilities. I recently taught a program about self-awareness and self-advocacy at your child's school. I am interested in finding out your opinion about what your child learned during the program. I will ask you several questions during the interview but please feel free to add anything you believe will contribute to this study. You may also choose to decline any of the questions you are not comfortable answering. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions

Participant Background

7. What is your relationship to this student?
    - parent/guardian/sibling, etc.
8. Tell me about yourself
    - Where do you live?
    - Where do you work?
    - Do you currently attend school? If so where? What is your course of study?
9. Tell me about your child's disability
    - What type of disability does he/she have?
    - When did you become aware that he/she had a disability?
    - What were you told about his/her disability?
    - Who told you about your child's disability?
    - How did finding out about your child's disability make you feel?
10. Have you ever talked about your child's disability with him/her?
    - What prompted the conversation?
    - If not, why?
11. How would you describe special education?

Disability awareness and advocacy

12. How important do you think it is for your child to have awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses as a student? Why?
13. How important do you think it is for your child to be able to ask his/her teachers for the support he/she needs to be an effective student? Why?
14. Do you think kids with disabilities should be taught about their disability? Explain.
    - What should they be taught?

    - Who should teach it to them?
15. In your opinion, what does self-awareness mean?
    - Do you believe self-awareness is important for your child?
16. In your opinion, what does self-advocacy mean?
    - Do you believe learning about self-advocacy is important for your child?
17. How do you think learning about self-awareness and self-advocacy affects your child's life during high school?
18. How do you think learning about self-awareness and self-advocacy affects your child's life after high school?
19. Has your child shared with you any of the activities he/she has been working on at school regarding his/her disability?
    - If so what were the activities he/she shared with you?
    - What did you think of the activities he/she shared with you?
20. What do you think about your child learning about his/her disability at school?
21. What do you think students with disabilities do after high school graduation?
22. What are the three most important things you hope your child learns before he/she graduates high school?
23. Where do you see your child in ten years?
    - Do you think learning about his/her disability and self-advocacy will help your him/her get there?

Closing

I have asked all of the questions I had for you. Is there anything you would like to add?

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you would like to ask me about this research project?

If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information (business card). Also, I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information?

APPENDIX L
Presentation Response Form – PowerPoint Presentation

Self-Awareness Project
Peer Evaluation Form

Today you will evaluate each of your classmates' presentations based on content and presentation/communication skills. Complete this form for each of the presentations.

Presenter: _____ Listener: _____

Please circle a number from 1 to 5 to rate the presenters communication skills.

	Needs More Practice ……...Great				
Eye Contact:	1	2	3	4	5
Posture:	1	2	3	4	5
Nonverbal:	1	2	3	4	5
Volume/Tone:	1	2	3	4	5
Organization:	1	2	3	4	5
Information:	1	2	3	4	5

Use this section to evaluate the content of this presentation.

Did the presentation include:

Introduction YES NO

Description of strengths and abilities YES NO

Description of disability YES NO

Education goal YES NO

Employment goal YES NO

Living goal YES NO

An opportunity to ask the presenter questions YES NO

I really liked _____

_____

Something you could improve or change _____

_____

APPENDIX M

Summary of My Performance and Goals - Revised

A Summary of
My Performance & Goals

Name: _____ Date of high school graduation: _____

Date of my most recent testing/evaluation: _____

MY PERFORMANCE

1. My disability is _____

2. Common characteristics of this disability include the following.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. My disability affects me in the following ways (writing, reading, spelling, math, mobility, verbal communication, understanding others, etc).

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. I have learned to compensate for these effects by using the following supports and accommodations.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. My greatest strengths and abilities include the following.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MY GOALS

1. I plan to live _____

   _____

   To reach my living goal I need to take the following steps:

   First. _____

   Second. _____

   Third. _____

2. I plan to go to school or get training _____

   _____

   To reach my education goal I need to take the following steps:

   First. _____

   Second. _____

   Third. _____

3. I plan to work _____

   _____

   To reach my employment goal I need to take the following steps:

   First. _____

   Second. _____

   Third. _____