

Towards Empowerment **and Independence:**

**Developing Skills in
Self-Determination
for Students who are Blind
or Vision Impaired**

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What is Self-Determination?

"This area of the ECC highlights the importance of believing in oneself, while understanding one's abilities and limitations. Students learn from successes and failures how to achieve one's goals in life. Self-determination is the ability for people to control their lives, reach goals they have set and take part fully in the world around them."

American Foundation for the Blind

What is Self-Determination?

"Self-determination encompasses defining and achieving goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself. It comprises a knowledge of self and others, personal management, effective communication, self-advocacy and advocacy within systems, decision-making, goal setting and problem solving."

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

What Does Research Tell us?

“Education and employment are impacted by an individual's self-determination. Post secondary work, education and training are more likely outcomes for individuals who are visually impaired that have achieved self-determination.”

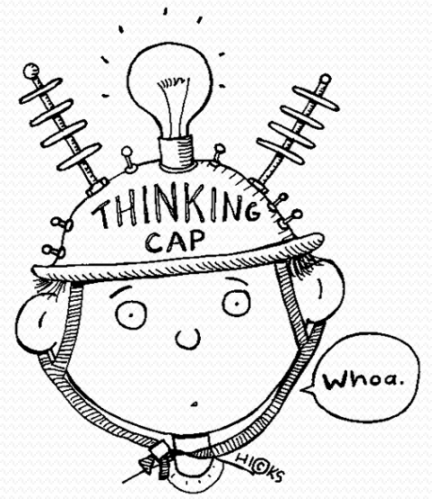
The American Federation for the Blind

Self-Determined Students

- More academically successful and engaged in schoolwork
- Contribute actively to educational and transition planning
- Increased independence and self esteem
- Experience more post secondary involvement
- Report higher quality of life and more positive experiences in early adulthood

Self-Determined People can:

- List their interests and strengths, motivations, challenges and limitations
- Make decisions
- Problem solve
- Set personal goals
- Request assistance when needed
- Decline an offer of help when not needed
- Identify their needs in relation to their vision
- Communicate effectively with peers and adults regarding appropriate accommodations
- Explain their eye condition in everyday language



Self-Awareness and Communication Skills

Developing self-awareness helps young people to have:

- improved confidence and self esteem
- more honest and genuine relationships
- better communication skills

Examples of good communication/social skills:

- voicing own opinions
- joining in conversations
- being a good listener
- responding appropriately

Self-Advocacy - communicating one's needs

It involves:

- having the ability and confidence to speak up
- knowing what to advocate for to achieve goals

It means that you:

- know your rights and responsibilities
- can express your thoughts and feelings
- have confidence to ask for what you need

Teaching Students with Vision Impairment About Self-Advocacy

When is self-advocacy useful?

- when being assessed
- at your education plan meeting
- making a complaint
- disclosing information about your VI
 - work experience, job interview

What places could you use skills in self-advocacy?

- home, school, TAFE, university, work, cafe, shop, public transport

Assertiveness Communication Skills

Assertiveness allows you to communicate needs, wants and feelings. It means that you will:

- feel good about relationships
- have more control of your life
- feel more relaxed and confident about yourself

Lesson About Vision Impairment

- Year 7 student - Retinopathy of Prematurity
- PowerPoint presentation, covered:
 - The eye
 - Disability awareness
 - What causes vision impairment?
 - Eye and vision words

Student Interview Questions -

- Interests
- Eye condition, glasses
- Different vision in each eye
- Visual acuity
- Challenges
- Assistive technologies

Promoting Self-Determination at Home and School

- Promote choice making
- Encourage decision making
- Promote reasonable risk taking
- Encourage problem-solving
- Encourage exploration of possibilities
- Develop goal-setting
- Help the individual to understand their vision impairment
- Promote self-advocacy
- Facilitate development of self-awareness and self-esteem

Seeing the World: A Self-Determination Program

- Self Determination
- Disability Awareness
- They Eye
- Vision Impairment
- Living with a Vision Impairment
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Goal Setting
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Advocacy
- Support Networks

Student Activities

- About Me

- Self-Awareness
- Goal Setting
- Self Advocacy
- My Eye Condition
- Letter of Disclosure
- My Support Networks

Real Life Experiences of People with Vision Impairment

9 Amazing People:

- A Chef
- A Painter
- A Singer
- An Architect
- A Photographer
- A Surfer
- An Athlete
- A Paralympian
- An Motivational speaker

8 Interviews – Questions about when people needed to:

- make a request
- ask for assistance
- decline an offer of help
- inform someone about
their vision

For the following resources- email:

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- 1. Seeing the World: A Self Determination Program for Students who are Blind or Vision Impaired**
- 2. Promoting Self-Determination in Youth with Vision Impairment: Tips for Families and Professionals**
- 3. Providing a Strong Sense of Belonging** (aimed at families of adolescents) *Partnering with Youth for Responsible Adulthood*
- 4. Student Interview**
- 5. What is Work? *myfuture* & Employability Skills: Youth Central**