



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Missouri Online Community of Practice in Transition

Ask the Expert: Jim Martin Student Involvement in Transition Planning Archived Discussion

James Martin, Ph.D., expert on student involvement in IEP and transition planning, answered questions and posted resources on the Missouri Community of Practice March 12-25, 2007. The event was hosted by DESE and The Transition Coalition. The Missouri Community of Practice can be accessed through the Transition Coalition website www.transitioncoalition.org.

Martin's Short Biography

Dr. Martin is the Zarrow Endowed Professor in Special Education and Zarrow Center Director at the University of Oklahoma. His professional interests focus on the transition of youth with disabilities from high school into postsecondary education and the workforce, and what must be done to facilitate success in high school and postsecondary environments. In particular he is interested in the application of self-determination methodology to educational and workplace settings. He has authored seven books, dozens of chapters for edited books, numerous journal articles, and several curriculum lesson packages related to self-determination and transition.

Under Dr. Martin's guidance, the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment at University of Oklahoma has developed an instructional lesson package to increase student participation in transition planning preparation and discussions. While the curriculum is still under development, you can access it at Student-Directed Transition Planning www.ou.edu/zarrow/pilot.



To learn more about self-determination and the AIR Self-Determination Assessments, go to the Zarrow Center website (<http://www.ou.edu/zarrow/sdetermination.html>).

Martin's Perspective on Self-Determination and Transition

Brief Self-Determination Overview

Self-determination consists of the skills, knowledge, and beliefs needed to engage in goal-directed behaviors based on an understanding of one's strengths, limitations, and self (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998a). Self-



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determination consists of self-awareness, self-advocacy, decision-making, independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustment skills that facilitate goal setting and goal attainment (Martin & Marshall, 1995). Students learn best to become self-determined when educators use interventions that systematically teach goal setting and attainment skills (Konrad, Fowler, Walker, Test, and Wood, in press).

Impact of Self-Determination Skills on In-School and Post-School Outcomes

Increased self-determination skills appear to improve in-school and post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Konrad et al. (in press) found that increased self-determination skills seem associated with increased academic performance. Martin, Mithaug, Cox, Peterson, Van Dycke, and Cash (2003) found significant increases in academic performance as students increased their self-determination skills. Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, and Herman (1999), Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, and Herman (2003), and Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1992) conducted a 20-year longitudinal study and found that self-determination attributes predicted post high school success. They also found that their former students who identified postschool goals during early adolescence had better postschool transition outcomes. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) measured the self-determination of students with learning disabilities and MR prior to their exiting high school. Students with higher levels of self-determination had higher employment rates. Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) replicated the 1997 study and found the same positive benefits of increased self-determination skills. Martin, Mithaug, Oliphint, Husch, and Frazier (2002) compared employment outcomes for almost 600 workers with disabilities, who completed a systematic self-determination and job placement program, to 200 workers who only completed the job placement program. Those who completed the self-determination and job placement program kept their jobs significantly longer than those who did not.

Links between self-determination and transition outcomes prompted the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition to call for the inclusion of self-determination instructional strategies to prepare students for their transition from high school (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998b). Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, and Herman (2002) believed that teaching disability awareness, goal setting, and other self-determination skills needed to become a part of the secondary SPED curriculum. Learning to become self-determined increases the control students experience over their education and transition outcomes (Mithaug, Mithaug, Agran, Martin, & Wehmeyer, 2003).

Listening to Student Voices: Increasing Student Participation In Their Transition IEP Meetings

Special education law requires that students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) be invited to attend their transition IEP meetings. Why? Because students' interests, strengths, and needs will be discussed to determine post-high school goals, which will then be used to formulate the remainder of the IEP. Post high



school goals will direct the completion of students' course of study, transition activities, and objectives.

Across the country, about 80% of transition age students now attend their IEP meetings, which represent a large improvement from a few years ago when few high school students attended their IEP meetings. But does student attendance at IEP meetings actually result in active student discussion at their educational planning meetings?

What Happens at Typical Middle and High School IEP Meetings

Research by OU's Zarrow Center faculty and staff, along with colleagues from the University of Colorado, examined what students and IEP team members think about the typical, educator-directed secondary IEP transition planning process. Students and team members reported that students know what to do, understand what was said, know the reasons for the meeting, and talked less than any other IEP team member. Not surprisingly, students reported the lowest level of satisfaction about their IEP meetings of all team members, and students felt less comfortable sharing their thoughts and suggestions more so than all other IEP team members. Special education teachers talked the most at the meetings. Parents and special education teachers talked more about student interests than did students.

Our research in Oklahoma schools found that many special education teachers thought their students participated a lot during IEP meeting discussions. But, our direct observations of secondary IEP meetings, found that students on average talked 3% of the time. Why the discrepancy between the perception of special education teachers and actual observed student behavior? Could this discrepancy imply that special education teachers simply equate attendance with participation and are satisfied with nothing more? If students attended their meetings and only talked 3% of the time, perhaps students did just what educators expected. It seems rather naïve to believe that students will participate in their meetings and learn what to do through serendipity, but this is just what traditional educator-directed IEP meetings expect.

Our direct observation of Oklahoma educator-directed IEP meetings also found that middle and high school special education teachers talked on average 51% of the time, with family members talking during 15% of the meetings. Administrators and general educators talked an additional 18% of the time, with support staff talking during 6% of the meetings. Multiple conversations happened during 5% of the meetings and no conversations occurred 2% of the time.

Students, who represent the newest member of the IEP team, contributed little to the IEP meeting discussions, and appeared to simply be token members of their IEP teams. Under this condition, how much ownership and responsibility do students feel? How can students become more actively involved in their IEP meetings?

Teaching Students to Become an Active IEP Meeting Member

Numerous research studies from across the country have demonstrated that students can learn the skills to actively participate in their IEP transition meetings when IEP team members expect student participation, and educators teach IEP meeting



terminology, roles, and what to do. Many of these studies used an instructional program called the *Self-Directed IEP*. Our research in Oklahoma middle and high schools also found that the *Self-Directed IEP* instructional program did indeed increase student participation in their IEP meetings. We found that students on average increased their participation from 3% of the time to almost 13% of the time after receiving *Self-Directed IEP* instruction. This represents a statistically significant and powerful finding.

As a result of instruction in what to do at their IEP meetings and changes in teacher expectations, many students: introduced themselves and their IEP team members, stated the purpose of their meeting, reviewed their past goals and progress toward the goals, asked for feedback, asked questions if they did not understand what was said, expressed their interests, skills, and limits, discussed goals, and finally closed their meetings. In comparison to students who did not receive *Self-Directed IEP* instruction, those who did receive the instruction reported much higher positive perceptions of their meetings, and higher rated transition discussions.

Our Oklahoma study, along with those done by other researchers across the country, clearly demonstrated that the *Self-Directed IEP* instructional program increased student IEP meeting participation. Teacher expectations influenced the extent that students engaged in their IEP meetings. Those teachers that taught students what to do and expected them to actively participate obtained more student input into the meeting compared to the teachers who expected only minimal input.



Questions & Answers

Question: *How can we help students become more involved in their IEP process?*

Comment: Sometimes I think parents try to protect the child and not tell the child of the disability. However, if the child does not fully understand what that means upon graduation, then the child can not correctly plan for the future. The example came up in a transition meeting where the parent had not told the child that he was a high functioning autistic child. This child NEVER participated in his IEP. That is a shame as he could express his needs, wants, desires, etc. so he could be heard. In order to have students become more involved, students should lead the discussion and invite the teachers he/she would want to attend in support or even needs help in. The child needs to know the diagnosis as much as he/she could understand. I always wanted my students in the meetings and I applied this method to Parent/Teacher Conferences too. The student could express the frustration with the homework, the test, etc. and ask questions. It allowed for open dialogue that in the end best serves the student-IEP or non-IEP.

Martin's Response: We want students to leave high school being able to describe their needs, interests, skills, supports, and accommodations. I believe most students can begin to learn about their disability while in elementary school. As they become older, students then learn more about their disability.

Question: *We have a format for an SOP; the format suggests the topics and sources from the PLAAFP. I would like to see a sample.*

Martin's Response: You can download a copy of the draft Oklahoma Student-Directed Summary of Performance from the File Repository. Using the SD-SOP students write in first-person language their postschool goals and information about their disability.

Follow-up Question: Do you have a completed sample? Thanks for your help.

Moderator's Response: Each state is working to develop guidelines for their Summary of Performance, and there are few completed examples out there. Here are a couple I found. Please don't assume that the text meets DESE's standards, but both examples are vetted by other states, and I think they follow the Indicator 13 checklist.

Colorado Department of Education SOP Completed Example:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/SOP_SLD_Sample.pdf

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction SOP Completed Example:

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/transitn/summary/samplecompleted.pdf>

Question: *I have received conflicting information on how to write post secondary goals. I would like your opinion. One source states I should start with the phrase Student will.... and the other source says to use the phrase Student plans or hopes or something equivalent.....*



Martin's Response: Here is an example that Paula Kohler from NSTTAC used: Karen will attend KVCC in the medical technology (radiology) program and work in the health care industry.

If we get to the point where students begin to develop their own IEP, I hope that eventually the goals become written in first person. So, instead of using Karen will, the goal will start with "I will attend KVCC" See the difference.

To me the big question concerns students who do not know what they want to do when they leave school. In these cases, would a goal like this work? What do you think?

Karen will undertake a series of on-the-job observations and interviews to determine the job she would like to obtain after high school.

Today, many students do not know what they want to do. How will we write measurable postschool goals for them?

Follow-up Question: Do we need a goal in each of the above areas or only if applicable?

Martin's Response: Go to <http://www.nsttac.org/> and download a copy of the indicator 13 checklist. This checklist is being used by states across the country to evaluate secondary IEPs. According to this checklist (which the U.S. Dept of Ed, OSEP approved) we must have an education or training, and an employment goal. Independent living is optional.

Question: *You said that students need to learn to lead their IEPs. I would certainly agree that it is a skill and will be useful in other areas of life - post-secondary education, on the job, banking, etc. How do students learn these skills? Has someone developed lesson plans?*

Martin's Response: Students learn the skills to become actively involved in their IEP meetings from teachers and family members who teach them what to do, and then provide them the opportunity to practice these skills. We now know that when students become actively involved in their IEP meetings, the meetings become positive and focus on strengths, do not take any more time than teacher-directed meetings, and when completed the participants like them better than teacher-directed meetings.

A few research-validated lesson packages exist. One if called the Self-Directed IEP, which Sopris West distributes (www.sopriswest.com), another is Self-Advocacy Strategy available from the University of Kansas (www.ku-crl.org/), and CEC publishes a lesson package called Student-Led IEPs.

Response: I have asked the student to write their PLAAFP. In order distinguish their input from the IEP team's input I use "____ reports" or something similar. I have had students as young as autistic fourth grades provide input in this manner.

Martin's Response: Great idea!!!

Response: Here are a few of sources that might help you get started:



http://www.idea_practices.org/bk/catalog2/student-led_ieps.pdf

http://www.ncset.org/institutes/proceedings/2002_01_23.pdf

http://www.askaspecialist.ca.gov/archives/2001/transition/Nov_2001.htm

Question: *How does an IEP meeting in which the student is actively involved look different from the typical IEP meeting?*

Martin's Response: Another good question. When students learn the Self-Directed IEP steps and educators provide opportunities for students to use what they learned, IEP meetings look very different. Students no longer just sit there and wish they were anywhere else. Students participate, students talk more, and as a result the IEP team feels much better about the meeting when it is completed. The meeting focuses more on students' strengths and interests rather than their deficits. Students will sit at the head of the table rather than off to side of the table. Afterwards, students know more of their IEP goals.

A myth exists that student-directed meetings will take longer than educator-directed meetings. Our research found that both meetings take the same amount of time. See the resource papers that will soon be available at this website that will describe more of these differences.

Martin's Response: I re-reading the comments, I thought that I would share what has taken place at the Oklahoma School for the Blind. Last year the school taught all their middle and high school how to become more active in their IEP meeting using the SD-IEP. We presented the results of this yesterday at the National CEC Conference to a room of mostly teachers & administrators who work with students with visual impairments or who are blind. The school adapted the SD-IEP materials to fit these students. After an all-day "leadership" retreat where the students learned the basic skills, most of the teachers began expecting students to participate at an enhanced level. We developed an IEP team training PowerPoint that randomly selected teams watched prior to the start of the IEP meeting. This team training presentation increased student participation from 13% of the time (with just SD-IEP) to 18%. More interesting, special education teacher talking decreased from 42% of the time to 31%.

The school had a group of teachers and students this past year role-play their IEP meeting at the state's annual Transition Institute meeting and at the annual OK Dept of Ed Special Education Conference.

Response: In the IEP meetings I have attended, when a student leads or has input into their IEP process, he/she shows ownership. If the student participates in the IEP process, he/she feels talked "with" not "to." There is a difference! If talked "to", the student does not feel ownership-it is his/her future the IEP team is talking about.

Question: *How can we help students become their own advocates?*

Martin's Response: Great question. We need to take advantage of all the opportunities that schools offer for students to learn and practice being self-



advocates. Two specific examples illustrate this point. First, think of the IEP meeting. Most students today come to their IEP meetings, but play a very passive role. Instead, educators can teach students to become active IEP participants and learn to the skills needed to even lead their own IEP meetings. Teachers can develop their own materials to teach students how to do this or use one of the available lesson packages. Second, we need to teach students to request their own accommodations. During the beginning of a school year instead of sped teachers telling general education teachers students' accommodations and modifications, let's teach the students how to request accommodations and support from their general education teachers.

Students who plan on going to postsecondary education need to learn about their disability, useful accommodations, and effective supports. When they enroll at their postsecondary education's disability support office they will need to describe their disability and useful supports and accommodations.

To summarize, we need to think of all the opportunities available at school and in the community for students to advocate for themselves. Instead of educators doing this, let's teach students with disabilities to do this themselves.

Question: *Is there data showing that self-determined students have better postschool outcomes?*

Martin's Response: YES! Several studies now show that students with higher levels of self-determination have better postschool outcomes than those with lower levels of self-determination. A recently completed 20-year follow-up studies of adults with LD Goldberg et al. found a very strong association between improved outcomes and students who established postschool goals while still in high school and other important self-determination skills.

Question: *What are the components of the Self-Directed IEP curriculum?*

Martin's Response: The Self-Directed IEP contains these major components: a) begin meeting by stating purpose, b) introduce everyone, c) review past goal and performance, d) state your school and transition goals, e) ask questions if you don't understand, f) deal with differences in opinion, g) state the support you'll need, h) summarize goals, i) close meeting by thanking everyone, and last) work on IEP goals all year.

When students learn and educators provide the opportunity for them to engage in these steps, student participation in the IEP meeting dramatically increases. Yet, during transition discussions (even when taught the Self-Directed IEP steps), students say little during the transition discussions. To increase students' participation during transition discussions, we have just launched a new lesson package called Student-Directed Transition Planning. You can view this lesson package by going to its temporary web site: www.ou.edu/zarrow/pilot. We are just now undertaking the first of two research studies to demonstrate its effectiveness. Please look over this new lesson package and let me know what you think. We also



have time to modify/change problems. So let me know these, too. Eventually this web site will find a permanent home at the main Zarrow Center web page (www.ou.edu/zarrow).

The Self-Directed IEP and the new Student-Directed Transition Planning lessons should together dramatically increase students participation at their transition IEP meetings.

Self-Directed IEP Research

Martin, J.E., Van Dycke, J.L., Greene, B.A., Gardner, J.E., Christensen, W.R., Woods, L.L., & Lovett, D.L. (2006). Direct observation of teacher-directed IEP meetings: Establishing the need for student IEP meeting instruction. *Exceptional Children*, 72(2), 187-200. [Teacher-Directed IEP Meetings 4 .pdf](#)

Martin, J.E., Van Dycke, J.L., Christensen, W.R., Greene, B.A., Gardner, J.E., & Lovett, D.L. (2006). Increasing student participation in IEP meetings: Establishing the self-directed IEP as an evidence-based practice. *Exceptional Children*, 72(3), 299-316. [Martin et al 2006.pdf](#)

Van Dycke, J.L., Martin, J.E., & Lovett, D.L. (2006). Why is this cake on fire? Inviting students into the IEP process. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 42-47. [Why Cake On Fire 4 .pdf](#)

Summary of Performance Documents

Each state is working to develop guidelines for their Summary of Performance, and there are few completed examples out there. Here are a couple I found. Please don't assume that the text meets DESE's standards, but both examples are vetted by other states, and I think they follow the Indicator 13 checklist.

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http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/SOP_SLD_Sample.pdf

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction SOP Completed Example:

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/transitn/summary/samplecompleted.pdf>

Student Involvement Presentation Resources

These PDF files contain information on self-determination and self directed IEPs. They include:

1. An overview of Self-Determination [SD Overview IU8.pdf](#)
2. Results of a study on student involvement in the IEP process [IEP study IU 8.pdf](#)
3. Quotes from students regarding their involvement in the IEP process [ItsNotEasy IU8.pdf](#)
4. An overview of the Self-Directed IEP [SD IEP IU8.pdf](#)
5. Example PowerPoint presentations from students self-directing their IEP [Example IEP IU 8.pdf](#)



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