

Ripple, J.D. (2001). *Self-determination and the mildly disabled child: The effects of a goal-attainment curriculum in establishing effective goal attainment strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Auburn University.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Self-determination is a key component in developing self-directed, goal-oriented, autonomous behaviors in students with mild mental retardation and learning disabilities, which can lead to improved post-secondary outcomes. Research grants in the last several years have led to the development of several self-determination curriculums. This paper studies the effects of a goal-attainment curriculum: and its purported ability to help students with mild disabilities learn goal attainment strategies. Three measures were used to study the effectiveness of this curriculum: pre- and post-test analysis of teacher's observations of students involved in the study; analysis of individual student's progress on goal-related activities during the intervention.

Pre- and post-test analysis of the teacher's observations of 29 students and their goal-related behaviors indicated significant increases in all four sub-areas rated: student plan, student action, student evaluation, and student adjustment. Teacher observations rated student [self-] evaluation as the weakest area, while remaining a significant increase, and student adjustment as the area of greatest gain.

Analysis of goal-related tasks of individual students using a modified multiple-baseline design indicated that there was some effect from the intervention, but that it was also influenced by outside factors such as attendance and socio-economic status. Data from a total of 17 students were used in this study due to attendance criteria. Students who performed best on goal-related activities also came from goal-related families. Students who performed the poorest were in classes in which attendance was poorest and hence, influenced other students. No student from low socio-economic background was able to meet the attendance requirements for this part of the study.

Similar data emerged upon individual interviews with students. Students from more goal-oriented households responded more favorably to the curriculum than did those students from

households that were more economically depressed.

Results from this study indicate that self-determination curriculums such as the one tested in this study are effective, but are limited in effectiveness to students who have already been influenced by goal-related behaviors that are likely to be seen in higher socio-economic families. Students from impoverished households are more likely to remain unaffected by such a curriculum.