

The Effect of Training on Student-Directed Planning Practices

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This study evaluated the effect of training on student-directed planning practices in association with Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. The training program implemented, *Next S.T.E.P.* (Halpern, Herr, Wolf, Doren, Johnson, & Lawson, 1997), focused on teaching students the skills needed for transition planning, including self-evaluation, goal-setting, and self-directing a planning meeting.

Participants

The subjects ($n = 34$) for this study were drawn from a secondary school population of students with mild mental retardation in Alabama. The subjects were identified as having mild mental retardation by the Multidisciplinary Eligibility Team according to the Alabama Administrative Code 290-080-090 (Alabama State Department of Education, 1998). This identification process ensured that the students participating in the research met the federal definition for mental retardation. The grade levels of the participants, 9th through 12th, were selected because the secondary grades are the point at which students with disabilities are typically required to have a transition plan and/or a transition services needs statement.

There were 16 students from one school and 18 from the other school participating in the research. All of the students were identified as having mild mental retardation and two of the students also had a second disability diagnosis. One of the students in the control group had emotional conflict in addition to mild mental retardation and one student in the experimental group had multi-physical disability as a secondary diagnosis.

Methods and Procedures

Students were automatically or randomly assigned to the control or experimental groups, depending on their availability for participating in the intervention. Students who were unavailable to participate in the intervention due to a scheduling conflict were automatically assigned to the control group. Students in the control group did not receive any training or instruction in how to participate in IEP/Transition Planning meetings before their meetings were held. These students were invited to attend the meeting but were not told anything about how to participate in the meeting.

Efforts were made to ensure students assigned to each group were comparable with regard to important variables at the start of the research. The important variables for comparing the groups were student full-scale Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores, level of self-determination, locus of control, and broad reading and mathematics scores. Multivariate analyses of variance run on the five variables indicated there were no

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significant differences in the areas of IQ, self-determination, locus of control and achievement scores between the students in the control and experimental groups before the treatment began.

Students in the experimental group participated in the *Next S.T.E.P.* training program over a four-week period. Graduate students served as the experimental teachers. These students have experience working with students with disabilities and were trained in how to implement the *Next S.T.E.P.* curriculum in order to increase the external validity of the research. Instructional sessions for the treatment took place five times a week for 4 consecutive weeks. The daily lessons lasted from 40 to 60 minutes. The lessons were implemented according to the teacher manual. The manual recommends a class size of 15 to 20 students and offers several suggestions regarding the duration for implementing the curriculum. The two classes in the study had 11 and 23 students. The teacher of the class with 23 students agreed the program would have been easier to implement with fewer students. Also, the IEP meetings for the students needed to be held approximately 6 weeks after the school year started. This made it necessary to implement the lessons everyday for the four weeks before the IEP meetings were to occur. Although both teachers maintained a flexible schedule by occasionally taking more than one day for some lessons or covering two lessons in one day, both teachers agreed they would have preferred if the lessons could have been spread out over a longer period of time.

The IEP meetings were held for the students in the control group before the intervention began so the data for the control group could be collected before students were exposed to the intervention. These students had their IEP meetings and then were allowed to participate in and benefit from the *Next S.T.E.P.* training program. The meetings were held at different times throughout the intervention for the control group students who were unavailable to participate in the intervention due to scheduling difficulties. All meetings for students in the experimental group were held during the week after lesson 15 was completed. Lesson 15 is the last lesson in the program that deals directly with goal setting and student-directed transition planning meetings. Lessons 16-19 prepare students for what will occur after the transition planning meeting has taken place. Students are taught how to make the plan work, review goals and activities, and share concerns during these lessons. These last four lessons served as closure for the intervention and were not intended to impact the information gathered at the IEP meetings.

Each student was asked to complete a transition knowledge form immediately before his or her IEP meeting and a student satisfaction questionnaire one day after the meeting. These post-intervention assessments were administered by the researcher and trained graduate students.

Independent Variable

The independent variable for this research was treatment. Students in the treatment group participated in the *Next S.T.E.P.* training program before their IEP meetings. *Next S.T.E.P.* was selected due to the comprehensiveness of the skills included in the program. Additionally, the program includes all resources teachers need to easily implement the lessons. Students in the control group did not participate in any type of training related to goal setting or participation in transition planning meetings prior to completing the knowledge or satisfaction scale or participating in the IEP meeting. The students in the control group who did not have a scheduling conflict participated in the *Next S.T.E.P.* training after his or her IEP meeting was held.

Dependent Variables

Three measures were chosen to evaluate the effect of training on student-directed planning practices. The measures selected were student participation in the IEP meeting, student transition planning knowledge and student satisfaction in the IEP meeting.

Student Participation Measure. The *Student Participation in IEP Meetings Direct Observation Form (SP-IEP)* was adapted from the *ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Assessment* (Martin & Huber Marshall, 1994). The *ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Assessment* is a rating scale designed to be completed by teachers while implementing the *ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Transition Curriculum* (Martin, & Huber Marshal, 1994). Student behaviors listed on the *ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Assessment* were adapted to create the *SP-IEP*, a direct observation tool for recording student behaviors at IEP/Transition Planning meetings. The directing behaviors included in the *ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Assessment* were modified to coordinate with the skills for leading a planning meeting that students are taught in the *Next S.T.E.P.* curriculum. The *SP-IEP* was completed for all students participating in the research. The observers attended each student's IEP meeting to complete the form, but did not interact with meeting participants or comment during the meeting.

The *SP-IEP* asks observers to identify whether students exhibit the following behaviors during the meeting: (a) thanks everyone for coming (no, 0 or yes, 1), (b) introduces participants (no, 0 or yes, 1), (c) begins meeting by stating purpose (no, 0 or yes, 1), (d) names a goal he or she has set (no, 0 or yes, 1), and (e) closes meeting by thanking participants (no, 0 or yes, 1). When observers evaluated whether the student named a goal he or she had set, they were also asked to identify if the student discussed starting and finishing dates (no, 0 or yes, 1), present skills (no, 0 or yes, 1), skills that need to be improved (no, 0 or yes, 1), activities to reach the goal (no, 0 or yes, 1), whether help is needed (no, 0 or yes, 1), and evaluation information for meeting the goal (no, 0 or yes, 1). Students were given one point for each behavior exhibited at the meeting. The list of specific behaviors exhibited and a total score were reported for each student.

The *SP-IEP* also provides space for observers to list the order of the topics discussed at the meeting including: (a) summary of student's current test results, (b) scheduling/classes for this year, (c) graduation options/requirements, (d) discussion of goals and objectives, (e) discussion of employment and independent living objectives, and (f) other. Additionally, there is a place for observers to list meeting participants, time of the meeting, and a summary of participant comments.

Transition Planning Student Knowledge Questionnaire. The *Transition Planning Student Knowledge Questionnaire* was developed by the researcher. It asks students a series of questions related to transition planning. Specifically, students were asked to discuss topics addressed in the *Next S.T.E.P.* curriculum such as transition planning, goal-setting, and self-evaluation. The researcher or the trained data collectors completed this questionnaire with each student immediately before he or she attended the IEP meeting. Answers for nine of the questions were considered either right or wrong with one point given for a correct response. Two of the questions required listing the steps to reach goals and the areas for planning. These questions were "in order to help you reach goals, what are some important things you might do?" and "if you were doing planning for your future, what are some areas you might think about?" Points were

given on these two questions for the total number of correct responses supplied by the student. The student responses for each question were examined and scored by the researcher. Student answers were rated by the researcher with points given for acceptable responses. While there were specific responses expected based on information presented in the intervention, students in both groups were given credit for any appropriate response regardless of whether or not it was the expected response. For example, in response to the question “if you were doing planning for your future, what are some areas you might think about?” students were expected to give the following four areas: personal life, living on your own, jobs, and education and training. Students who provided other appropriate answers such as college, transportation, work, having a family, and sports were also given 1 point for each area listed.

Student Satisfaction Measure. The *IEP/Transition Planning Meeting Student Satisfaction Questionnaire* was adapted from the *Student Satisfaction and Involvement in the Transition Planning/IEP Process Questionnaire* constructed by Field, Sawilowsky and Hoffman (1997). The questions, presented in an interview format, were slightly adapted in order to meet the needs of this particular research project. For instance, the questions related to progress toward goals were deleted and the question “did you want to attend the meeting?” was added. Students were asked whether or not they attended the meeting, wanted to attend the meeting, prepared for the meeting, and helped set goals at the meeting. The specific student responses were recorded by the researcher or a data collector. Individual responses were reported for each student with positive responses (yes or no answers, depending on the nature of the question) being calculated to compute the total score.

The satisfaction questionnaire was completed one school day after the IEP meeting, except in two cases. It was completed by one student 5 school days after her meeting because she was absent from school up until that point. The satisfaction questions had to be followed up with one student 7 school days after her meeting because she told the data collector she did not attend the meeting when first interviewed one day after the meeting. The student remembered attending the meeting and answered the questions upon follow-up.

Control for Possible Intervening Variables

Efforts were made to control for possible teacher effects during the IEP meetings. Each teacher held IEP meetings with students in the control and treatment groups to control for potential teacher bias during the meetings. The teachers were given a list of suggested topics for discussion at the IEP meeting and three specific probe questions he or she was to ask. The topics and probe questions did not control or constrain the discussions at the meetings. They were intended only to serve as a guide for the teachers to help maintain some level of consistency for the discussions during all of the meetings. The suggested topics included summary of student’s current test results, scheduling/classes for this year, graduation options/requirements, discussion of goals and objectives, and discussion of employment and independent living objectives. The probe questions the teachers asked students at each meeting were: (a) “what are your strengths that help you do well in your classes?” (b) “are there certain goals that you want to work on to help you do better in school?” and (c) “are there goals that you want to work on to help you get a job?” Although the meetings were not scripted or specific content required, teachers were cautioned not to lead students in any way during the IEP meetings. Data collectors were instructed not to give credit on the *SP-IEP* on any behaviors for which the student was prompted or coached. For instance, at one meeting a very

shy student was prompted by her mother to introduce herself and thank her teachers. This student was not given credit for exhibiting the behaviors since they were in response to a prompt. Students who stated a goal after being asked the probe questions were given credit for displaying any of the behaviors associated with goal setting.

Data Analysis and Results

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to determine the effect of the training program on the total scores for the *SP-IEP*, knowledge questionnaire and satisfaction questionnaire. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on each dependent variable as a follow-up to the MANOVA. For each dependent variable, the individual items that were dichotomous in nature were analyzed using the chi-square statistic (χ^2). Two of the individual items were not dichotomous and therefore were analyzed using ANOVA procedures. The Hotelling's trace test of significance at $p \leq .05$ level was used for MANOVA and ANOVA analyses and the three main measures. The significance level of $p \leq .01$ was used for the chi-square on the individual items and $p \leq .025$ was used for ANOVA analyses on the individual items.

A MANOVA was performed to evaluate the effect of training on the total scores for the three dependent measures, behaviors at the IEP meeting, knowledge questionnaire, and satisfaction questionnaire. Significant differences were found for the control and experimental groups on the dependent measures (Hotelling's Trace = .781, $F(3,30) = 7.812$, $p \leq .05$). The magnitude of effect was .001 with an observed power of .978. With significant results on the MANOVA, the three dependent measures were followed up with ANOVA. The ANOVA yielded significant differences between the control and experimental groups for the behaviors at the IEP meeting ($F = 13.683$, $df = 1, 32$, $p = .001$) and the knowledge questionnaire ($F = 17.009$, $df = 1, 32$, $p \leq .001$). No significant differences, however, were found between the two groups on the satisfaction questionnaire ($F = .782$, $df = 1, 32$, $p = .383$).

Separate analyses were performed on the specific items of the three measures to determine which specific items contributed to the significant findings. Chi-square was performed on dichotomous items, while ANOVA was performed on the items that were not dichotomous in nature. According to the Chi-square analyses, students in the experimental group were significantly more likely to introduce participants ($\chi^2(1) = 7.835$, $p = .005$) and name a goal he or she has set ($\chi^2(1) = 12.593$, $p \leq .001$) at the IEP meeting. The Chi-square analyses on the knowledge questionnaire revealed that students in the experimental group were more likely to correctly answer the question "what is transition planning" ($\chi^2(1) = 21.156$, $p \leq .001$). The ANOVA conducted on the question "if you were doing planning for your future, what are some areas you might think about?" also showed significant differences between the control and experimental groups ($F = 6.776$, $df = 1, 32$, $p = .014$). No significant differences between the two groups were found on the satisfaction questionnaire for any of the specific items. Tables 1, 2, and 3 report the frequencies and percentages for the individual items on the main measures.

Table 1
Frequencies and Percentages for Number of Students Who Exhibited *SP-IEP* Behaviors

	Control ($n = 16$)		Experimental ($n = 18$)	
<i>SP-IEP</i>				
Thanks everyone for coming	0	(00%)	4	(22.2%)
Introduces participants*	0	(00%)	7	(38.9%)
Begins meeting by stating purpose	0	(00%)	6	(33.3%)
Names a goal he or she has set*	0	(00%)	10	(55.6%)
States starting and finishing dates	0	(00%)	0	(00%)
Discusses present skills	0	(00%)	0	(00%)
Discusses skills that need to be improved	0	(00%)	0	(00%)
Describes activities to reach the goal	0	(00%)	6	(33.3%)
Discusses whether help is needed	0	(00%)	2	(11.1%)
Gives evaluation information for meeting goal	0	(00%)	0	(00%)
Closes meeting by thanking participants	1	(6.3%)	8	(44.4%)

*Item met the prescribed level of significance

Table 2
Frequencies and Percentages for Number of Students with Correct Responses
on the Knowledge Questionnaire items

	Control ($n = 16$)		Experimental ($n = 18$)	
<u>Knowledge Questionnaire</u>				
What is transition planning?*	0	(00%)	14	(77.8%)
If you are trying to evaluate your skills, what kind of information would you consider?	2	(12.5%)	2	(11.1%)
When you are planning, why is it important to know your strengths and weaknesses?	5	(31.3%)	10	(55.6%)
What is a goal?	8	(50%)	15	(83.3%)
Why is it important to set goals?	11	(68.8%)	16	(88.9%)
In order to help you reach goals, what are some important things you might do?				
2 correct	0	(00%)	1	(5.6%)
1 correct	6	(37.5)	8	(44.4%)
If you were doing planning for your future, what are some areas you might think about?*				
4 correct	0	(00%)	4	(22.2%)
3 correct	1	(6.3%)	2	(11.1%)
2 correct	2	(12.5%)	3	(16.6%)
1 correct	9	(56.3%)	8	(44.4%)
Tell me a goal you might set for yourself.	11	(68.8%)	17	(94.4%)

*Item met the prescribed level of significance

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages for Number of Students
with Positive Responses on the Satisfaction Questionnaire Items

	Control ($n = 16$)		Experimental ($n = 18$)	
<u>Satisfaction Questionnaire</u>				
Did you attend your most recent IEP meeting?	16	(100%)	18	(100%)
Did you want to attend the meeting?	14	(87.5%)	15	(83.3%)
Did you prepare for the meeting?	7	(43.8%)	12	(66.7%)
Did you help set any of the goals that were talked about at your meeting?	9	(56.3%)	14	(77.8%)
Do you think you were involved in the meeting?	15	(93.8%)	16	(88.9%)
Were you satisfied with your involvement in the meeting?	16	(100%)	17	(94.4%)
Is there anything you will do differently for your next IEP meeting?	12	(75%)	13	(72.2%)

*Item met the prescribed level of significance

Discussion of Findings

Results of this study indicated that there were significant differences between the control and experimental groups when compared on student participation in the IEP meeting and the knowledge questionnaire. The students who were taught to plan for their future using the *Next S.T.E.P.* (Halpern, et al., 1997) training program exhibited significantly more self-directed behaviors at the IEP meeting and scored significantly higher on the transition knowledge questionnaire. Analysis for the satisfaction questionnaire failed to show significant differences. A detailed discussion of the results for each measure follows.

SP-IEP

Significant differences were found among the students in the control and experimental groups on the *Student Participation in IEP Meetings Direct Observation Form*. Students who participated in the *Next S.T.E.P.* training program were more likely to exhibit self-directed behaviors at their IEP/ Transition Planning meeting. The students who were trained in student-directed transition planning were specifically more likely to introduce meeting participants and name a goal they had set. There was only one of the sixteen students in the control group who exhibited any of the self-directed behaviors listed on the *SP-IEP* at the IEP meeting. This one student in the control group shook his teacher's hand at the end of the IEP meeting. This is in comparison to the experimental group that had eleven out of eighteen students exhibit one or more of the self-directed behaviors. Three of the students in the experimental group exhibited 5 of the self-directed behaviors, and two students exhibited as many as 7 behaviors.

The finding that students with mild mental retardation who were trained in student-directed transition planning were more likely to name a goal that they have set is consistent with the findings of Van Reusen and Bos (1994). In their study, Van Reusen and Bos reported that students with learning disabilities who participated in a transition planning training program provided significantly more information about their strengths and weaknesses and about their goals for learning and careers than students in a contrast group during the IEP conference. The results of these two studies are explicit indications that students with disabilities can learn to set goals and provide important information at IEP/Transition Planning meetings.

Since there were 7 students in the experimental group who did not exhibit any of the behaviors, it was important to know if there was a reason why. All students in the experimental group were interviewed after their meeting to find out if he or she had lead the meeting and why or why not. The questions and specific responses for these interviews can be found in Table 4.

Table 4
Experimental Group (n = 18) Responses Regarding Intervention and IEP Meeting

... taught how to lead a planning meeting? Yes	... lead your IEP meeting? Yes	<u>n</u> = 7 (38.9%)
What did you do to lead your meeting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started the meeting off by introducing everybody, thanking everyone for coming • Talked about what I want to do when I grow up, what I want to be, what my goals are, how I'm doing in school • Opened it, closed it • Me and my parents and my teachers where talking about setting my goals • I welcomed everybody there, I introduced the people there, I told them what I want them to help me on, they said they will help me • Introduced the people, thanked the people for coming, and told them why they were at the meeting • I welcomed them to my meeting and I introduced myself to them and I said thank you for coming at the end 		
... taught how to lead a planning meeting? No	... lead your IEP meeting? Yes	<u>n</u> = 2 (11.1%)
What did you do to lead your meeting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had to think about what goals I would achieve, what I would do after school, and I introduced myself • I told them who I was, what I want to be, my plans for my future, what I am going to do when I graduate, told them I am going to move out in a year 		
... taught how to lead a planning meeting? Yes	... lead your IEP meeting? No	<u>n</u> = 7 (38.9%)
Why didn't you lead your meeting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was scared • Because I just didn't want to do it, because I am shy • My teacher started it off, because I never did that before • Because I didn't know what to say • Because I didn't want to, because I am shy, I can't talk in front of a lot of grownups • I don't know why • The teacher helped me lead the meeting 		
... taught how to lead a planning meeting? No	... lead your IEP meeting? No	<u>n</u> = 2 (38.9%)
Why didn't you lead your meeting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone else led it • They didn't let me say anything but 'hi,' they gave me the opportunity, but they were just going too fast; because my teacher was talking, I didn't want to disturb her so she could jump down my throat 		

Several of the students stated they just did not want to or were too shy. It is important to note that some of the students who were trained made a decision not to lead their own meeting. The fact that they did not lead the meeting was a choice and is not an indication that the program did not work nor that the student did not possess the behavior.

Knowledge Questionnaire

Another significant difference between the two groups was on the knowledge questionnaire scores. The students in the experimental group correctly answered more questions on the Transition Planning Student Knowledge Questionnaire. Specifically, students in the experimental group were more likely to provide correct responses for the questions *what is transition planning* and “if you were planning for your future, what are some areas you might think about.” None of the students in the control group could state what transition planning is, while fourteen students in the experimental group were able to provide a statement that transition planning has something to do with planning for future, preparing for your future, setting goals for the future, or picking a career. It is interesting that none of the students in the control group knew what transition planning is. These are secondary students with disabilities, some of whom are seniors in their last year of school. This is an indication that without training in the very near future, these students will experience the transition from school to adult life not knowing what the term transition planning refers to and possibly never having done any transition planning.

Satisfaction Questionnaire

There were no significant findings related to the satisfaction of students in each group with the IEP meeting. Both groups generally provided positive responses to the items on the satisfaction questionnaire. The finding related to both groups of students being relatively satisfied with their involvement in the IEP meeting is very similar to the finding reported in the study by Van Reusen and Bos (1994). These researchers revealed that students in both the experimental and contrast groups felt they had effectively participated in their IEP meetings. It seems possible that the findings in both studies are an indication that the students in the control and contrast groups had very little knowledge of what role they could have actually played in the IEP meeting and were basing their responses on a limited amount of information. The students in the control group may have answered the satisfaction questions less positively had they known about self-directed transition planning and student-directed IEP meetings.

Although it was documented that students in the control group were less likely to exhibit self-directed behaviors at the IEP meeting, students in the control group gave positive responses on the satisfaction questionnaire and often stated that they prepared for and felt involved in the meeting. This is interesting considering only one of the students in the control group was observed exhibiting any of the behaviors on the *SP-IEP* at the IEP meeting. Additionally, 7 students in the control group said he or she had prepared for the IEP meeting, but only 3 of these 7 students gave responses to the question “what did you do to prepare?” that indicated some type of action on his or her part. The other 4 gave responses that were unrelated to the actual IEP meeting or that were passive in nature. Although students in both groups indicated they had prepared, a careful look at the specific responses shows the students in the experimental group took a more active role in preparing for the meeting. A list of the responses to the question “what did you do to prepare?” can be found in Table 5.

The specific responses are also revealing when looking at the question pertaining to whether or not the students felt they were involved in the meeting. Students in both groups typically answered yes to this question, indicating they felt they were involved in the meeting, but the specific responses indicated being “involved in the meeting” meant a much less active role for the students in the control group compared to the students in the experimental group. Responses to the statement “tell me what you did at the meeting” for the students in the control group included activities such as talked, gave answers, found out something, and sat there. Students in the experimental group described talking, welcoming individuals, making introductions, thanking individuals, setting goals, and talking about the future at their IEP meetings. Despite the fact that students in both groups typically stated that they felt involved in the meeting, it is obvious from the students’ own words, the students in the experimental group had what would be considered more active involvement in the IEP meeting. The specific student responses to the statement “tell me what you did at the meeting” are found in Table 6.

Table 5
Student Responses to Satisfaction Question #3

<p>Control group responses to the following questions: Did you prepare for the meeting? (No: $\underline{n} = 9$, Yes: $\underline{n} = 7$) If yes, what did you do to prepare?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought about what I want to do when I finish school • Talked to the teacher about my skills and stuff • Get ready, thought about things I would like to do • Sign papers and take papers home • Stay calm • Really, nothing, really • Don't know
<p>Experimental group responses to the following questions: Did you prepare for the meeting? (No: $\underline{n} = 7$, Yes: $\underline{n} = 11$) If yes, what did you do to prepare?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I practiced what I say • Went over and talked about transition planning • A teacher went through my folder with me, what career I would want, what I would want to do myself • There was a folder to tell what the meeting would be like • Went over goals and things I would do living on my own after school, things I want to do on my own after school • It was over in the classroom where I prepared • Read over the class stuff • Go over the stuff with my teacher, the transition worksheets and stuff • Read over that guideline • I made sure my folder was ready • I just came and listened, that is preparing myself

Table 6
Student Responses to Satisfaction Question #6

<p align="center">Control group responses to the following questions:</p> <p>Do you think you were involved in the meeting? (No: $\underline{n} = 1$; Yes: $\underline{n} = 15$)</p> <p align="center">Tell me what you did at the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-- • Talked about stuff • Talked about Graduation • Talked • Talked about what I would like to learn • Talked to them about my career and my future • Talked to the teachers and agreeing with some of the decisions that the teachers made • I talked to people • Gave answers to questions they asked • Answered questions they asked • Answered questions • They asked me a couple of questions and I told them what I did and everything • I sat there and listened to them say things about me and things that I like to do • I found out what I did good on my reading and my math • Sat there and told some of what I want to do • Just sat there; I listened to my mom and teacher talk
<p align="center">Experimental group responses to the following questions:</p> <p>Do you think you were involved in the meeting? (No: $\underline{n} = 2$; Yes: $\underline{n} = 16$)</p> <p align="center">Tell me what you did at the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No--I prepared, they asked me questions about jobs that I am interested in • Sat there and listened • No--I answered questions • She asked me some questions and I answered • Talked • Talked about what I am going to do when I finish school • We talked about jobs, what kind of job they was going to help me get and help me get my own place • Introduced the people that came, I told them why they were here at the meeting and thanked everybody for coming to the meeting • I talked about my eyesight and jobs I want to do in the future • I welcomed them to my meeting, I asked questions, I told them what I want to do and I told them thank you for coming to my meeting • I introduced all my people that were there, I told them what I want them to help me with, I asked them could they help on what I was talking about • I introduced everybody • I introduced my mommy to my teacher • I introduced myself, I told who I was, I told them what I want to be, I told them what my plans was for my future after I graduate. • I introduced myself, told them it was nice to meet them, told my grades, told what I want to achieve, and my teacher talked about my IEP • I came up with all of the goals, actually I came up with them in class • Went over transition plans, talked about what a transition plan is • Read a paper, told the teacher my future and what I want to do

Summary

The student-directed transition planning program investigated in this study helped develop the transition planning skills of students with mild mental retardation by teaching self-evaluation, goal setting, and self-directing a planning meeting. The development of transition planning skills was evidenced through the significant differences in number of self-directed behaviors exhibited at the IEP meeting and the scores on the transition planning knowledge questionnaire for the students in the experimental compared to the students in the control group. Although satisfaction with the IEP meeting was the same for students in the two groups, it is important to consider the practical significance in the other findings. Students who were trained using the *Next S.T.E.P.* (Halpern, et al., 1997) training program were more likely to help lead their IEP meeting by introducing participants and stating a goal they had set for themselves. They were also more likely to define transition planning and list areas to consider for transition planning. These are critical skill areas that can support and promote the transition from school to adult living for individuals with disabilities. These findings suggest training high school students with mild mental retardation in transition planning can positively affect student-directed transition planning and student participation in the IEP/Transition Planning meeting. Implementing training programs for transition planning and other self-determination skills is one step teachers and other professionals can take in helping individuals with disabilities plan for their own future and become more independent.

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