

Self-Determination/Mentorship Questionnaire

It's important for all individuals to learn about self-determination and be in charge of their own lives. Becoming self-determined involves trust, power sharing, communication, system-change and skills and supports that enable a person to live a full life.

We are asking you, as self-determined individuals to assist us in our implementation of a curriculum to develop this critical skill set in our students. Your perspectives based on your own experiences and success can inform our practice in delivering this curriculum.

When we talk about self-determination we're talking about a process that individuals go through to learn about their strengths, weaknesses, needs and preferences as well as the options and supports that are available to them. With this information these individuals can determine what is important to them and develop a plan to attain their goals. Through this process individuals learn to accept and value themselves, to use their weaknesses to find strengths, to recognize and respect rights and responsibilities, to take care of themselves and to develop and nurture positive relationships. Individuals also learn to set goals for themselves, to plan small steps to meet those goals, to anticipate results and to be creative when those results are not immediately realized.

Through this process of becoming self-determined, individuals learn to take risks, communicate with others about their plan, access resources and support, problem solve and negotiate towards solutions, and handle conflict and criticism while remaining focused and persistent. Individuals learn to compare actual outcomes with expected outcomes and make the necessary adjustments to realize success.

1. Think of an important goal you set for yourself and were able to achieve. It could pertain to employment, going to college, living on your own, going on a trip, building friendships, etc. What supports were critical to you in meeting this goal?
2. What other people in your life encouraged you to develop the self-awareness that led to your ability to determine your life course and reach your goals?
3. Self-determination is different for each person, depending on the person's circumstances. How would you define self-determination for yourself?
4. What are some key times, experiences or events in your life that significantly impacted your awareness and abilities to become a better advocate for yourself and your goals?
5. Think of a situation in which you experienced disappointments or setbacks in attaining your goals. What people or resources did you find useful to move forward or readjust your goals and expectations?

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6. Who were some of your role models/mentors and what did you learn from them?
7. When thinking back to your years in middle or high school, which of your teachers stands out in your mind as a person who made a real difference for you and influenced your thinking or your actions. Why does this person stand out? Can you think of any decision that you made or action you took because of this person's influence?
8. Describe how various assistive technologies have enabled you to achieve your goals or overcome an obstacle.
9. What resources have you found particularly useful in pursuing goals?
10. How did you learn to advocate for yourself, for example, to gain access to resources, to have sufficient control over your time and money, to set your own priorities, etc. Was this something you learned more from experiences or did you receive some instruction in school?
11. If you had the opportunity to speak with Bridge School students, what experiences, tips, practical advice, insights would you want to share in order to help promote their self-determination as they transition to life beyond school?