



August 19, 2004

## Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

# Promising Practices in Supporting Student Development of Self-Determination Skills

presented by:

### **Sheila Gritz**

Senior Training Specialist and Self-Determination Initiative Coordinator  
The Transition Center, The University of Florida

### **Robert Aguis**

Principal, Marchman Technical Education Center, Pasco County, Florida

### **Frank Roder**

Teacher, Marchman Technical Education Center, Pasco County, Florida

### **Matt Boselli**

Student, Marchman Technical Education Center, Pasco County, Florida

**Ms. Johnson:** Good afternoon and welcome to “Promising Practices in Supporting Student Development of Self-Determination Skills.” I’m Donna Johnson, Project Coordinator with the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the University of Minnesota. I would like to extend a special welcome to our Exiting TA Community of Practice members. Today we are pleased to have Robert Aguis, Sheila Gritz, Frank Roder, and Matt Boselli as our featured speakers.

- **Robert Aguis** is the Principal of Marchman Technical Education Center in Pasco County, Florida. He has been a principal for the past five years and an educator since 1987. As principal [of Marchman], his job responsibilities include the supervision of 16 job preparatory programs, two dropout prevention and retrieval programs, basic education programs, ESE programs, and a full complement of adult education programs. Programs include pre-age 22 and adults with disabilities. Mr. Aguis was elected by his peers as Pasco County’s Administrator of the Year for the 2003-04 school year.
- **Sheila Gritz**, Senior Training Specialist and Self-Determination Initiative Coordinator with the Transition Center at the University of Florida, has 17 years of experience in the field of transition. From 1987-2000, she was employed by the Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources System Gateway Associate Center, where she worked on various demonstration projects related to improving transition services and postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. Sheila began coordinat-

ing Florida’s Self-Determination Initiative through the Transition Center at the University of Florida in 1998. Sheila’s work in the area of self-determination has been recognized by national experts and featured in numerous newsletters and publications, including Research Connections in Special Education and Promising Practices and Programs of the National Transition Alliance.

- For the past 23 years, **Frank Roder** has been a teacher in the state of Florida. His primary teaching area has been exceptional student education. He has been employed in Pasco County since 1980 as a special ed teacher and behavioral specialist. As an advocate for students and educators in exceptional student education, Mr. Roder has served on local and state-level committees in the field. He currently co-chairs the Florida Education Association’s ESE Committee and ESE Caucus. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Mr. Roder has been a trainer for the district in the areas of verbal diffusion, crisis management, disability awareness, self-determination, and IEP development. He is especially proud of his role as one of the developers of the *Standing Up For Me* self-determination curriculum which helps ESE students take a more active role in determining educational decisions.
- We are also pleased to have **Matt Boselli** as our student presenter, who is really serving us well today by coming and sharing his stories with us.

The format of today’s teleconference will be a 45-minute presentation with a question-and-answer period after.

We ask that you hold your questions until after the presentation is completed. I also want to have people take note that on the NCSET Web site we have a PowerPoint presentation for you to follow as well as a Word document that the presenters will be referring to. You can find the information on the NCSET Web site at [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org) under "Teleconferences." So with that, I will turn it over to Sheila.

**Ms. Gritz:** Thank you, Donna. I want to start by talking a little bit about Florida's history with self-determination. From 1994-98, Florida had several model projects that were funded under what was known then as the Blueprint for School to Community Transition project. In fact, there were five projects at that time that represented 11 school districts in our state. All those projects ended up having very positive outcomes with their activities in the area of self-determination and were also involved in research that was conducted both by Florida State University and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. As a result of that initial work, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services initiated what we are calling Florida's Self-Determination Initiative. From 1998 through today, we have been involved in looking at awareness activities to make folks more aware of what's going on and should be going on with self-determination, looking at implementation and looking at research, and we will talk more about that.

The overall goals of the Self-Determination Initiative are to increase awareness of self-determination, so that teachers know what's out there, what practices have been happening around the nation, what curriculum they might be able to use, assessments, and resources. We also want to make sure that folks are taking a look at how they might integrate self-determination into their classroom instruction and activities, but the bottom line of it all is that we want to make sure they are improving students' school and postschool outcomes through teaching them self-determination skills.

Looking at the activities that we have conducted in Florida's Initiative, beginning in 1998-99, we held an annual statewide conference. We brought in some of the best experts in the nation to talk about self-determination to make our folks aware of the different curricula that are available. Since then, we've been conducting annual or regional training events for all of Florida's educators and families. We have also, to the extent possible, offered district-specific workshops, we've disseminated curriculum assessments and resources through all of our events—which, I think, is somewhat unique—that teachers coming to our trainings and statewide workshops would be able to leave with curricula and things in

their hands that they can go back and implement. We've conducted presentations at all statewide transition-related conferences in an effort to get the word out about how important self-determination is to our students with disabilities. We've provided technical assistance, predominantly in terms of looking at, if you are working with certain students, what types of curricula might work best for them. For example, what's used frequently with middle schools, what's used frequently with secondary, etc., so that folks know what different types of curriculum are available and work best, based on teachers' perceptions.

We are very proud of a couple of products in Florida that a lot of work has gone into over the years that promote self-determination.

- ***Dare to Dream (Revised)***. *Dare to Dream* was originally developed by Dr. Kris Webb who is now with the University of North Florida and is an excellent tool for teaching students how to develop their own desired postschool outcome statements which should be the starting point in developing all IEPs with a transition focus.
- ***Standing Up For Me***. We are very, very proud of the *Standing Up For Me* curriculum. It was developed by a team of educators in Pasco County, which was one of the reasons that we pulled in the folks from Pasco County today. We've had a lot of good feedback on that curriculum from folks who have been trained and are using it in our state. It is somewhat unique because it focuses on primary, intermediate, middle school, and secondary lessons. We've not really done much yet in the area of research, but we've been looking at what we want to do as a state. We've developed a format that we're going to begin implementing over the next couple of months, all aligned with all of our trainers in the area of self-determination, to look at their implementation efforts. We're also looking at doing some research this year to evaluate the effectiveness of *Standing Up For Me* as well as the overall impact of self-determination skills, instruction, and training on student outcomes.

In terms of strategies that we have used for gaining buy-in and support, we think that one of the reasons that more and more teachers, including our regular education teachers, are buying into self-determination is because we are giving them the autonomy to choose models, curriculum, assessments, and activities. Also, our state has indicators for developing quality Individual Education Plans. A number of those indicators support the use of self-determination. One good example would

be the use of student-directed IEPs, which is one of our quality indicators. We have supporting course requirements, we have a number of courses that already have language that supports self-determination from participating in the IEP to advocating for oneself and we have a draft course description at the secondary level that's been recently developed for self-determination. We also look at the correlation to Florida's Sunshine State Standards and our Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma with those of our existing products that support self-determination, *Dare to Dream* and *Standing Up For Me*. We have additional proposed language to the State Board of Education rules that would require, beginning by the student's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday—or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team—that the consideration of instruction or the provision of information in the area of self-determination to assist the students to be able to actively and effectively participate in IEP meetings and self-advocate for themselves. We think that's going to go a long way toward helping some of our districts which have been a little slower to come on board because there will be some language now supporting instruction and information in the area of self-determination.

The other thing is integrating instruction into existing coursework. We don't want our teachers or anyone else to see self-determination as one more thing to do or as one more add-on. It should be a part of what we are doing every day in terms of our curriculum and instruction in the classroom. In terms of the preliminary outcomes that we have had with the self-determination initiative, we know that in 1998, at the end of the model project under the auspices of the Blueprint for School to Community Transition project, we had 11 school districts that were reporting activities in the area of self-determination. In 2000, we had 24 school districts reporting some sort of activities in the area of self-determination; in 2002 we were up to 41. Our goal is to eventually have all 67 school districts in Florida fully committed to implementing activities and instruction in the area of self-determination.

And as for the future of Florida, we plan to continue our annual statewide and regional training events. We are really looking more at a train-the-trainer model. We have already implemented that with teachers. This year we are going to really focus on pulling in more parents as trainers to build capacity, to go back and deliver training and instruction in their own home communities and districts. We started this year facilitating an annual follow-up meeting to find out what folks were doing and what they needed additional assistance with. We are planning to implement our research activities beginning in Sep-

tember or October. And then, we have already spoken a little bit about the exit surveys and postschool follow-up. Our state may be somewhat unique in that we have an existing data system that collects data on all of our students that exit, 18 months after they leave the school system. And so we will be correlating a lot of what we do with what's known as effective data, and data that's collected 18 months after students leave, to determine whether or not they are employed or in postsecondary institutions, along with some of the other pieces we want to look at in terms of quality-of-life issues.

A couple of things that we are also looking at doing this coming year include to develop some supplemental modules to our curriculum to address transition healthcare, and we are planning to develop some new complementary products to look at helping students who have academic improvement plans, and facilitating more instruction in the general curriculum. We have state resources and Web sites through our Department of Education, [www.thetransitioncenter.org](http://www.thetransitioncenter.org)—the Transition Center's Web site where we have a page under Our Initiatives that addresses self-determination. And, we have a new Web site under construction called the Florida Transition Web Site for Students and Families that's actually being funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that will be hosted through the Transition Center. We've already mentioned our products. Another new product that's just recently come off the shelves in Florida is *Dare to Dream for Adults*, and it's a product that we believe will be useful not only to adults with disabilities but also to many of our secondary students who've already used *Dare to Dream (Revised)* and want something a little more comprehensive to work on. At this point, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Roder.

**Mr. Roder:** Hello, everybody. In my school, Marchman Technical Education Center, I work with middle school students who are classified as severely emotionally disturbed. Our students are the only middle school students assigned to the high school adult campus. They have previously been in other Pasco County middle schools and were unsuccessful in those schools. They were assigned to Marchman as the last stop before home instruction, residential placement, or confinement in a juvenile justice facility. Many of these students are placed in our program after manifestation hearings for drug offenses or other violent behavior on their home campuses. The therapeutic severely emotionally disturbed program consists of a teacher, two paraprofessionals, and myself as a behavior specialist. Our program gives students many opportunities for success in academic, behavioral, emotional, and/or personal

growth. We treat our students as students who've made bad choices rather than as bad students, and we're giving them the respect they are entitled to as individuals.

When students are placed in a program, they are given the opportunity to become actually involved in planning and implementing the program designed for those successes. However, many of these students do not participate at all, put their head down and offer nothing about what is best for them. Using *Standing Up For Me* has made a major difference in my students' lives. We explain to our students what an Individual Education Plan is and how the Individual Education Plan is an important part of their education. My students, every week, write a weekly goal; each quarter they write a quarterly goal; and they also evaluate how they do on their Individual Education Plan goals each quarter. They also evaluate their strengths and needs. They learn how to deal with differences of opinion and how to express themselves appropriately. My students are now advocating for themselves, they are asking questions about educational decisions. They now understand how these decisions will impact them. Many of our students have achieved successes for the first time in their lives. An example of my students advocating for themselves happened two years ago when the high school cafeteria that prepares our lunches decided that my students could only order one entry for lunch and no longer would have a choice between sandwiches or salads or other selections. When my students first heard this, they became extremely angry and hostile. We discussed our options and they decided to write letters to the Director of Food Service of Pasco County. Within two days the decision was reversed and my students learned firsthand the power of the pen. The next school year, we had a new student in our program who was constantly trying to cause a fight. One of my students pulled him aside and told him that in this class we do not fight, we just write letters. I thought that was definitely an example of advocacy.

I look back at some of the students that I've had that have moved on to high school, I'd like to talk about a few of them:

- The first one is a student named **Danny**. Danny wasn't sure whether or not he wanted to go for a special or a regular diploma and was struggling back and forth with it. He listed the pros and cons of the decision and on his own he decided that he was going to put himself on the regular diploma. Last year as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader in high school, he did proceed to get all his credits and worked hard in achieving those goals.
- Another student, **J.J.**, lived with his grandparents.

His grandparents threw away the invitation to the Individual Education Plan meeting and J.J. didn't even know what happened. J.J. got the schedule in the mail and he said wait a minute, this is my decision, this is my life, I want to be part of it. So he actually called the school, re-scheduled the IEP meeting, and we joined him in working together on developing his goals for the year.

- Another student, **Kenny**: his parents really weren't very interested in what he wanted to do and he called me and asked if I could fill in and pick him up and take him to the school to be a participant in his Transition Individual Education Plan meeting.
- This year I had a student named **Dominic** who I really never thought picked up anything in the program. He came over this year, transferring to a different high school. He'd gone on to one high school earning credits for the entire year without a referral and was trying to get away from the severely emotionally disturbed label. He tried to enroll in another high school and they wouldn't even consider giving him any mainstream classes or any co-taught classes. He calls me and he asks what can we do about it. Instead of getting angry, we sat down, we developed the plan with his dad, and he is now taking the classes in the mainstream classroom.
- Last year, I also had a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student who made some major changes in how he dealt with adversity and differences of opinion, and he has now come so far. This last year he actually won an award from Pasco County as a turn-around student of the year in Marchman Technical Education Center.

I'm very pleased to introduce to you this afternoon to **Matt Boselli**. Matt has chosen to continue his education after receiving a special diploma in our FAPE program at Marchman. I really become involved with Matt over the last six months and I am happy to share our experiences. As the ESE team leader of my school, I am often invited to attend Transition Individual Education Plan meetings. In February, I attended a meeting which included Matt's parents, his teachers, but Matt was not there. At this meeting, concerns were raised about Matt's school performance and problems on the job training site. I knew Matt as a student in the culinary arts program at the school but I didn't really know him. I was asked to work with Matt on *Standing Up For Me*, so we were taking a more active role in the educational position in his Transition Individual Education Plan. At the same time, my principal was asked to present with me at the NCSET Capacity Building Institute to discuss self-determination

activities in my school. He wanted more information on self-determination and *Standing Up For Me*. So, he decided to watch me as I worked with Matt on *Standing Up For Me*. Actually, that was the longest observation I ever had – several sessions over several weeks. As I worked with Matt, I saw a transformation. Matt changed from a friendly, quiet, reserved student to a student who became very outgoing, self-assured, motivated, and wanted to be involved. He became more and more comfortable advocating for himself. I would like to read a letter from Matt’s mom on her experience of attending Matt’s last IEP meeting, which was addressed to my principal:

*Dear Mr. Aguis,*  
*We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and satisfaction concerning Mathew’s Transition Individual Education Plan meeting on Friday, May 6, 2004. It became immediately apparent that we have come a long way in our journey to help our son Mathew. Mr. Roder’s confidence building in Mathew’s ability to self-advocate for himself was a remarkable achievement. It was a pleasure to see Mathew at the head of the meeting table giving his version of what he wanted for himself in his future.*

Matt has been a pleasure to work with and I would like to let him tell you about some of his experiences. Matt, what were some of your fears?

**Mr. Boselli:** Building a relationship with Mr. Roder. Afraid of getting in front of the group, afraid of speaking to a group, afraid of parents’ reaction, worried my parents won’t let me go.

**Mr. Roder:** Okay, what kinds of things have you learned?

**Mr. Boselli:** How to be a part of a meeting, what was in my TIEP, that I was able to speak up and people would listen.

**Mr. Roder:** And so, what were you feeling after your Transitional Individual Education Plan meeting?

**Mr. Boselli:** Happy, more self-confident, more willing to try new things, excited about my independence, more comfortable about being an advocate for myself, improved relationship with parents, glad that I know what’s in next year’s IEP.

**Mr. Roder:** And what were some of the things you wanted?

**Mr. Boselli:** Full-time job, full independence, moving out alone.

**Mr. Roder:** Okay, and why do you think this is important to teach this in the school system?

**Mr. Boselli:** So kids know what’s going on, that it is our lives we are discussing, so kids can self-advocate, and

make some difference in their lives.

**Mr. Roder:** Okay. I am here today to let you know that *Standing Up For Me* is really working with my students. At this time, I would like to introduce my principal, Rob Aguis.

**Mr. Aguis:** Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Rob Aguis. I am the principal here at Marchman Technical Education Center. I just want to welcome you to our teleconference and let you know that Hurricane Charley has passed us and the weather here in Florida is sunshine and beautiful. Let me tell you a little bit about Marchman Technical Education Center. We are a school within a school. Our mainstay is our 16 vocational-technical job preparatory programs that serve high-school students and adult students. Students in the high school come to us half the day, that’s periods one, two, and three; periods four, five, and six, vice versa—then, they go back to the high schools. We serve six of the high schools within the west side of what we consider Pasco County.

In addition to the vocational programming, we also offer a full complement of adult education programs. Program offerings and service includes ABE, ESOL, GED, childcare training, CNA, and the administrative assistants program. ABE, of course, is Adult Basic Education; ESOL is the English Speakers of Other Languages; and CNA is the nursing assistant program. But we also have some other programs that we offer at Marchman, some teen programs, some dropout prevention programs, some dropout retrieval programs, and basic education programs. And, we also have some middle-school programs on campus. Services vary from student to student. We serve students from six weeks old, in our parenting program with our teen parents, and we also serve students that are six weeks old in our Pre-K program. Programs range to 60- and 70-year-old students as they come back to us to try and gain their diploma through our GED programming.

It is a school that serves on a daily basis 1,000-1,200 students that come and go, of all ages. It’s an open campus. We have buses coming and going throughout the day, every day. We have drivers coming in throughout the day; we have buses that drive people who want to come to our campus. It’s a great opportunity for the people of Pasco County. I do want to let you know, however, that it provides a great opportunity for a diverse population and we serve everyone that comes to our door. I also want to let you know that within Pasco County itself we do not support center schools for students with disabilities. But, for example, we offer a wide range of services and support options for students with disabilities, and they range anywhere from emotional

behavior disorders to a significant cognitive disability.

What's our campus perception and what's the atmosphere like? It's very positive. Everyone works together. Students of all ages come together, and we sometimes eat lunch together, and we always learn together and teach each other new things. The perception is positive, no matter what the program is. We have a smattering of programs and offerings that come together. In fact, this year one of the restructures was bringing everyone together as a team, and so we have restructured the school where not just our vocational programs are working together but our ESE programs are working with vocational and the other programs are working with our vocational programs. So we have a total team concept here at Marchman this school year.

What do we believe some of the outcomes for our students are? We have improved student behavior. We talk about student behavior—what the expectation is, how they need to behave, and what we are talking about when we try and send them beyond Marchman's doors. We try and prepare them for what's next, whether it be postsecondary, whether it be college, or whether it be into the world of work, we try and give them skills both in involvement in educational decisionmaking, and as Matt said, the self-confidence and the belief in themselves to go on and do well for themselves. As you know, communication skills are vital and important. First of all, they have to be happy and satisfied with themselves, so that they can go out and project themselves positively in the community, whether it be something as simple as going into a one-on-one job interview or going out to do a presentation or going out and doing some recruiting for themselves, or as we say, standing up for themselves when they need to advocate for themselves.

As we look into the classroom, some of the advantages that you have when we are talking about choosing the *Standing Up For Me* curriculum and the concept, is that we know that the students definitely have an interest in what's going on. They are able to speak up for themselves, they are able to tell us what their interests are, what they prefer, what some of their needs are, and they are able to set their own goals. There is a greater involvement, as Mr. Roder stated, from the students with their involvement in their IEP. In fact, they direct their own IEP meetings and they make their own educational decisions, and to see that is certainly incredible. So the other part of that is, as a teacher or as a participant of some of these conferences, we know that going through the goals and strategies is sometimes very long and arduous. Well, when students direct their own IEPs, they get right to the point. Everyone knows what the issue is, we know who the most

important person is, and that's a student who is directing his or her own IEP. Everyone stays focused and everyone stays on track. As far as the students are concerned, they love to take ownership. They love to be involved and they love to make their own decisions. We can see that their behavior has improved because they become responsible for their own behavior and they try to model behavior for each of their peers. As Mr. Roder stated in the letter-writing campaign to the district that came through me first, the students really did talk to each other about what behavior they expected and what goals and outcomes they expected as well. As far as the outcome, it is positive. It has been positive, they work, sometimes they have some steps back but we make some strides in the positive direction as well. As far as the advantage is apparent, you can see not just the transformation between the students and how the students feel about themselves, you also see the transformation in the eyes of the parents, how they look at their students, how they look at their child, whether the child is a middle-school child or whether their student is a young adult, 20 or 21 years old. The relationship's improved, their involvement's improved and certainly, you can see the pride and the respect that they have for their children after they have gone through this process. They use those self-determination skills at home. They use them at school in a positive way to advocate for themselves, and to advocate for their family, and it is awesome to see the transformation.

As an administrator of a high school adult center that serves so many students from as I said, six weeks old to 60 or 70 years old, as the climate is just positive. Working with some of the students who have gone through the program, we really handle referrals on a very limited basis. Students very rarely get in trouble. When they do, we try to get them back on task. There are cues, whether just to be looking at them or mentioning a few words, and we kind of get them right back on task. There was an example where at the end of the day I'm standing outside, you know, in the parking lot and I wait until buses leave our campus and the car riders as they leave the campus and the bus driver rolls up to me and was having a problem with one of Mr. Roder's students. And so I boarded the bus and the bus driver was very adamant about taking the student off the bus and we know how bus drivers can be. I went to the back of the bus and I talked to the student and merely mentioned Mr. Roder's name and I mentioned a couple of cues that I thought would help him just kind of calm down a little bit, and got him back in the right direction. Well, he did sit down, he was calm, I was able to work with the bus driver in order for the bus driver to take him home and from that point on,

we didn't have any problems. So, working with those students, going through the steps, cueing them, being a part of that, then knowing that I had some knowledge in regard to that, went a long, long way.

As far as where we are with self-determination and our district outcomes and where we want to be with that, let me go through a little bit of history with you here in Pasco County. It goes back, believe it or not, to 1993 or 1994, when Pasco County was one of six sites in the state of Florida funded as Ms. Gritz mentioned through the Florida Blueprint for School to Community Transition grant, and as you may or may not know, this was a five-year systems change grant designed to promote more successful transition from school to postschool activities. One of the activities that was sponsored through the grant was the training of self-determination. Pasco County initially focused on the self-directed Individual Education Plan process, which again prepared those students to participate in their own IEP meeting. Then in 1994, Pasco participated in the training provided by the University of Colorado, which Ms. Gritz mentioned, and used the *Self-Directed IEP Choice-maker* instructional series that Colorado did. Pasco followed that model. That process took students like Matt through their own self-directed transition IEP meetings.

During 1994-95, teachers at some of our middle schools and high schools were trained and began using the *Self-Directed IEP* curriculum. The secondary program here at Marchman, it was a teenage program, began to use a modified version of that *Self-Directed IEP* curriculum which evolved into *Standing Up for Me*. Now, to date, training using *Standing Up for Me* has been ongoing. At the high schools, we use the *Standing Up for Me* curriculum in conjunction with the *Self-Directed IEP Choice-maker* series, again that was developed by the University of Colorado. In the past year, 36 teachers, job placement transition specialists, and 2 counselors from vocational rehabilitation were trained that represented 9 high schools, 2 educational centers, 3 middle schools, and 3 elementary schools. This summer, 15 additional teachers were trained in self-directed IEPs, in that curriculum area. Here in Pasco County, teachers are encouraged to get involved and to participate, but they are not required to teach the self-determination skills. They do have the freedom, they do have the choice, and they are able to teach both of those curriculum areas. At Marchman, we are going to be expanding. We are looking at including self-determination or *Standing Up for Me* in some of the other programs, in Adult Basic or otherwise. In fact, we are including that in our continuous improvement plans for the 2004-05 school year. So, it is expanding here at Marchman. As we

try and piece this together and we look at the practices and the standards that kind of underlay the *Self-Directed IEP* and the *Standing Up for Me* curricula, we are looking at field enhancement, we are looking at things and talking about things like self-awareness and self-advocacy.

So, self-efficacy, decision-making, independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustments, and on the other side of the scale is, knowing yourself and valuing yourself, planning and acting, knowing what the experiences are, learning from those experiences, and knowing what those outcomes are going to look like. Where does this all come together within Marchman Technical Education Center and this vocational school? Well, when I pull up SCANS—The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills report—that was put out by the U.S. Department of Labor, and I am looking at the employability skills or the skills that employers are looking for, I am looking at skills like teamwork and problem-solving, it is the personal skills or communication, listening, creative thinking, goal setting, organizing, that type of thing. Those skills are the same skills that we teach our kids in *Standing Up for Me* and so there is a direct correlation there, when we are teaching our students whether they be in our technical programs or in our dropout prevention programs or in our retrieval programs to go out, enter into either the world of work and be communicative and be successful so they may go on to a postsecondary educational institution or maybe into college, the bottom line is self-determination. *Standing Up for Me* helps students, young or old, make their own choices, helps them set their own goals, helps them manage their own lives and it helps them make their own decisions for themselves. It's been great to see our students excel. I have had the chance to—as Mr. Roder mentioned, he calls it an observation or an evaluation, but I was learning right alongside Matt, learning that 11-step process, and I was able to see with him sitting right next to me here the change that he has made in his life and I can only tell you that I am extremely proud of that and that's why I think we chose to go into education and Matt is a great example of that.

So, I appreciate your time and I believe we are going to at this point, open it up for some questions and answers and we will be happy to facilitate some questions at this time. Thank you.

**Ms. Johnson:** So anybody in the audience have a question for our panel?

**Ms. Allen:** Hello, this is Karen Allen from the Department of Education in Missouri. And I would like to ask a couple of questions. We have a self-determination professional developer's module that we are getting out to the field through a train-the-trainer approach. But

I am interested in where are you are headed on the data collection piece or how your self-determination professional development is being implemented and also a little bit about the current piece to involve parents in this effort and we have some things in our module that I would like to know more about the actual implementation.

**Ms. Gritz:** Right. All right. Let me speak to the parent part first. We are seeing a huge interest in families this year to get more information and more training on self-determination, not that this is anything new. But one of things we observed, last year, we really targeted pulling in educators for the *Standing Up For Me* curriculum to start looking at providing instruction on the curriculum, that was the huge focus of our training and while parents were certainly invited to attend, they weren't our primary target audience. We think we may have been remiss there and so it's because we are getting so many more requests from parents to be able to go back and do additional training that we decided this year, we are going to strongly reach out and encourage all parent trainers that we know are housed within each of the 67 school districts in our state and each of the specialized centers that offers training in our state as well as our Family Network on Disabilities trainers, and really try to get them to come on board and also be available as local trainers within the district.

In terms of the data collection and the implementation piece—you've got my contact information at the end of the PowerPoint, and it should have my e-mail address. If you want to e-mail me later, I will give a little bit more information in terms of where we are going with the implementation pieces to collect data. But we came up with an online survey, it's taken us probably a year and a half to get it from theory to ready to go, because we wanted to get feedback from all of our educators to see if they believed that it would be reasonable to do. We got it through our review board and we are ready to roll forward with that. And our intent is on a quarterly basis, to start sending out the implementation component and have folks that have participated in our training give us feedback on whether or not they implemented self-determination curriculum, if so, what curriculum they've implemented, what they may have modified, how many people they've trained, also to give us feedback in terms of whether or not there are things that we need to change, if that gives you a little bit of feedback on where we are going with the implementation part.

**Ms. Allen:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**Ms. Johnson:** Any other questions from the audience? Well, this is Donna and I have a question for Matt. When you were talking about looking at employment after you leave school, any particular career areas

that you are interested in?

**Mr. Boselli:** Yes. Executive chef.

**Ms. Johnson:** Oh, okay. And is that something that you are learning at school as well?

**Mr. Boselli:** That's a no.

**Mr. Wetherow:** Hi, this is Dave Wetherow from Vancouver Island, British Columbia. I am interested in whether on the occasion when a family happens to bring another community member into the planning process, someone from their church or someone who works in an industry that the student might be interested in, have there been any occasions when that sort of opened up the circle and what was that like? What does that add to the planning conversation?

**Mr. Roder:** One of the activities I do with my students is have them actually list down the people they would like to invite to their conference and then we kind of go over, you know, why they want to invite that person or go from there and then I send that list of people they wanted to invite home to the parents for their review and if the parents are in agreement, the student's in agreement, we have a lot of different community members come in. We have had ministers from church come in, we have had probation officers come in, also their counselors that they work with, so there's been a large amount of people who have come in. They were technically not part of the educational family, and it's been very successful.

**Mr. Wetherow:** Thanks.

**Ms. Robinson:** This is Cindy Robinson from Arizona and I am wondering how different the revised version of *Dare to Dream* is from the original because we've got the original here? That's just my question.

**Ms. Gritz:** Okay, thank you. *Dare to Dream (Revised)* is really not that different than the original. The language is a little bit different. You can actually download it from the Florida Department of Education's Web site, which is listed in the resources on the PowerPoint. But that particular document, like I said, you can actually download it in a PDF format, just to see what it looks like. Now, *Dare to Dream for Adults* is significantly different. It's a lot more detailed and *Dare to Dream for Adults* is a very interesting product because the introduction to each chapter was written by a young man with a disability who is also a university student. Basically, he worked with Dr. Kris Webb at the University of North Florida, talked about his experiences and all of the walls he was running into in trying to access services and supports and was one of the folks who got into development of that product.

**Ms. Johnson:** And just to add to that, Dr. Kris Webb will be presenting on *Dare to Dream for Adults* for the teleconference on Thursday, October 28 at 2:00. So,



if people are interested in more information about that, make sure to mark that on your calendar. Any other questions for the panel?

**Ms. Smith:** Hi, this is Jane Smith from Arizona. Can you tell me where *Standing Up For Me* can be obtained?

**Ms. Gritz:** At the moment, it is a huge document and we are trying to figure out how we are going to meet our needs in the state in terms of being able to copy and get it out to the people who are already wanting to implement it. We anticipate that it maybe available in the future to other states at cost, because given the size of it, there is no way you can just access without some cost. We have not determined what that's going to be yet. We are also looking at down the road, hopefully PDFing the document. It's going to take some time to do, given the way that it was developed, and make it available on the Transition Center's Web site.

**Ms. Johnson:** I would like to thank our presenters for sharing their time and expertise with us and if you are interested in learning more about transition, helping youth to graduate and achieve success for postschool outcomes, I invite you to join our Exiting Community of Practice and you can find out more information about that at [www.tacomunities.org](http://www.tacomunities.org). And then I also wanted to mention our next teleconference features Sue Gronewold who will be presenting on New Mexico's Pathways to Employment. That will be Thursday, September 16 at 1:00 Central Time. So, thanks again to our panel members and thanks to all of you for participating.

*This teleconference was coordinated by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. This transcript is copyright free. Please duplicate and share with others.*

**Contact us at:**

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition  
Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD)  
6 Pattee Hall  
150 Pillsbury Drive SE  
Minneapolis MN 55455  
(612) 624-2097 (phone)  
(612) 624-9344 (fax)  
[ncset@umn.edu](mailto:ncset@umn.edu) (E-mail)  
<http://www.ncset.org> (Web)



# NCSET Teleconference

Promising Practices in Supporting Student  
Development of Self-Determination Skills

August 19, 2004

1:00 - 2:00 Central Time

# Presenters

---

- Sheila Gritz, Self-Determination Initiative Coordinator  
The Transition Center at the University of Florida
- Frank Roder, Behavior Specialist  
Marchman Technical Education Center
- Robert Aguis, Principal  
Marchman Technical Education Center

# Florida's History

- 1994 - 1998: Model Projects (Florida's Blueprint for School to Community Transition)
  - Positive Outcomes
  - Supporting Research
- 1998 - 2004: Florida's Self-Determination Initiative
  - Awareness
  - Implementation
  - Research

## Self-Determination Initiative: Goals

- To increase awareness of self-determination constructs, practices, curricula, assessments, resources, and outcomes among transition stakeholders
- To initiate and expand classroom instruction and dissemination of information in the area of self-determination
- To improve students' school and post-school outcomes through increased knowledge and application of self-determination skills

## Self-Determination Initiative: Activities

- Annual statewide/regional training events
- District specific workshops
- Dissemination of curricula, assessments, and resources
- Presentations at statewide transition-related conferences
- Technical assistance
- Products (*Dare to Dream/Standing Up for Me*)
- Research

# Self-Determination Initiative: Strategies

## Gaining Buy-in and Support

- Autonomy to choose models, curriculum, assessments, and activities
- Indicators for Developing Quality Individual Educational Plans
- Supporting course requirements
- Course description (Draft 2004)
- Correlation to Florida's Sunshine State Standards and Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma
- Addition to State Board of Education Rules
- Integrated into existing coursework

## Self-Determination Initiative: Outcomes

- Increase in school districts reporting one or more practices related to self-determination
  - 1998 (11 school districts)
  - 2000 (24 school districts)
  - 2002 (41 school districts)



# Self-Determination Initiative: Future

## 2004 and Beyond

- Continue annual statewide or regional training
- Facilitate annual follow-up meetings
- Conduct trainer and teacher implementation evaluations in the fall of 2004, quarterly thereafter
- Pilot evaluations to assess the effectiveness of *Standing Up for Me* in 2004 - 2005
- Develop and implement exit surveys and post-school follow-up to assess the impact of self-determination on student outcomes

# Self-Determination Initiative: Future

## 2004 and Beyond

- Develop supplemental modules to *Standing Up for Me* to address transition health care
- Develop new complementary products to address AIPs and facilitate instruction in the general curriculum

# State Resources

## ➤ Websites

- [www.myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/](http://www.myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/)
- [www.thetransitioncenter.org](http://www.thetransitioncenter.org)
- The Florida Transition Website for Students and Families (under construction)

## ➤ Products

- *Dare to Dream Revised (1999)*
- *Dare to Dream Training Materials (Draft)*
- *Dare to Dream Adult (2004)*
- *Self-Determination Information Brief (Draft)*
- *Standing Up for Me (2004)*

# Development of Self-Determination Skills

- Program Overview
- *Standing Up for Me*
  - Understanding the IEP
  - Self-Directed IEP Skills
  - Follow-Up
- Goal Setting (Goal for the Week, Goal for the Quarter)

# Student Outcomes

---

- Increased involvement of students in the planning of their education and lives
- Improved self-advocacy skills
- Greater capacity to set goals and develop a plan for accomplishing goals

# How Strategies are Working

- Transition to high school
- Transfer of skills
- Campus activities

# Self-Determination: Making A Difference

- Marchman Technical Education Center Overview
- Campus Perceptions and Atmosphere
- Student Outcomes
  - Behavior
  - Self-Esteem
  - Communication Skills

# Self-Determination Skills: Advantages

## ➤ Teacher

- Increased student input regarding interests, preferences, needs, and goals
- Greater student involvement in IEP meetings and educational decision making
- Less time in IEP meetings

## ➤ Student

- Greater involvement and ownership in educational decision making
- Improved behaviors
- More likely to achieve positive outcomes



# Self-Determination Skills: Advantages

## ➤ Parent

- Improved student/parent relationships
- Greater parental involvement and interest

## ➤ Administrator

- Positive climate
- Reduced number of referrals
- Increased time on task
- Cue student using skills learned

# Self-Determination: District Outcomes

- History
- District Commitment
- Teacher Autonomy
- Current Status
  - Encouraged, but not required to teach self-determination skills
  - Freedom to teach self-determination in any course

# Reconciliation of Practices with Standards

- Self-Awareness
  - Self-Advocacy
  - Self-Efficacy
  - Decision Making
  - Independent Performance
  - Self-Evaluation
  - Adjustment
- Martin & Marshall, 1995
- Know Yourself
  - Value Yourself
  - Plan
  - Act
  - Experience Outcomes & Learn
- Field & Hoffman, 1994

# Questions and Answers

---

## For additional information:

Sheila D. Gritz

Senior Training Specialist / Self-Determination Initiative  
Coordinator

The Transition Center at the University of Florida

P. O. Box 117050

Gainesville, Florida 32611-7050

Phone: (386) 792-3747

Fax: (352) 392-4443

E-mail: [chaos@alltel.net](mailto:chaos@alltel.net)

[www.thetransitioncenter.org](http://www.thetransitioncenter.org)