

Using Technology to Promote Self-Determination Among Youth with Developmental Disabilities: Project MY VOICE

Northern Illinois University

&

Indian Prairie School District #204

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Overview of Project

- Project MY VOICE is a collaborative 3-year project between Indian Prairie School District #204 and Northern Illinois University that was funded by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities.
- Collaborative activities involve workshop sessions and training for educational staff, pre-service educators, and parents/guardians to have the essential skills and resources to promote and support self-determination and self-advocacy among youth with developmental disabilities.



Goals of Project

- The overarching goal of Project MY VOICE is to develop a systematic model for preparing youth with developmental disabilities between the ages of 16-21 to have necessary leadership skills to become self-advocates regarding important personal life decisions.



Project Participants

- Students: Youth with developmental disabilities between the ages of 16-21
- Educators: Teachers, therapists, vocational coordinators, etc. from IPSD #204 who work with targeted youth
- Pre-Service Educators: NIU students who are enrolled in MY VOICE course
- Parents: Although not formal participants, we also provided information and assistance to parents/guardians of targeted youth



Activities of Participants

■ Students

- Communicated strengths, interests, & preferences and identified needed supports during assessment activities
- Explored available options within life domains and evaluated pros & cons of each
- Gathered & assisted with development of multimedia materials that reflected strengths, interests, preferences, & needs
- Presented MY VOICE presentation at IEP/transition meeting



Activities of Participants (cont)

■ Educational Personnel

- Attended five workshops and developed a plan of action for implementing Project MY VOICE
- Assessed students regarding strengths, interests, preferences and needs.
- Collaborated with students, pre-service educators and parents/guardians to conduct assessments
- Assisted students with gathering multimedia materials to create MY VOICE presentations
- Developed goals and action plans for targeted students



Activities of Participants (cont)

■ Pre-Service Educators

- Enrolled in project course at NIU
- Met with educational staff, students, and parents/guardians if possible to determine assessments to be used
- Assessed student's strengths, interests, preferences and needs under the supervision of educational staff
- Wrote assessment reports and shared with educational staff & NIU instructors
- Assisted student with creation of portion of VOICE project



Resources for Participants

- ***MY VOICE Template:*** A PowerPoint template was created that provided a guide for assessing and presenting students' strengths, interests, preferences, and identifying needed areas of support across life domains
- Overview of Template



Resources (cont)

- ***MY VOICE Toolkit Binder***: A corresponding Toolkit was provided that had resources and assessments for each life domain outlined in the MY VOICE template.
- Overview of Binder



Resources (cont)

- ***MY VOICE Toolkit Box***: In addition to the binder, participants were provided with the following resources at each site:
 - Transition Planning Inventory (TPI)
 - <http://www.proedinc.com/Customer/productView.aspx?ID=875>
 - YES (Your Employment Selections)
 - <http://www.yesjobsearch.com/>
 - Choicemaker: Choose & Take Action Software
 - http://web.uccs.edu/education/special/self_determination/cta_software.html
 - Reading Free Vocational Interest Inventory
 - <http://www.proedinc.com/customer/ProductView.aspx?ID=3052>
 - Attainment Company Life Skills Curricula
 - <http://www.attainmentcompany.com/xcart/product.php?productid=16384&cat=0&page=1>

Resources (cont)

- **Technology:** Each site (4) was provided with the following equipment:
 - Laptop Computer
 - Digital Video Camera
 - Digital Camera
 - USB Microphones
 - DV tapes, memory cards, firewires, external hard drives, CDs



Resources

- ***Print and Video Tutorials:*** Following each workshop, participants were provided with both print and video tutorials for how to use the technologies
- Overview of tutorials



Additional Resources

- ***Picture Resources, Guide for Adapting TPI & Associated Symbol-Based Survey:*** To modify assessments for students with more significant needs, picture resources and a guide for modifying the TPI, as well as a symbol-based version of the student form was provided
- Overview of picture resources, guide, & modified form



Sample Presentations



What Student Participants Thought about the Project

Item	% yes
1. I liked looking at choices for what I would like to do after school.	96%
2. I liked finding more about some of the activities that interest me.	100%
3. I feel like I have a better idea of what I would like to do after I graduate from high school.	71%
4. I feel like I will be able to tell other people about what I would like to do.	75%
5. I liked taking pictures and videotaping some of the things that are interesting to me.	83%
6. I liked being able to show what it is I want to do with my life.	92%
7. I think showing people my video made them want to help me reach my goals.	87% (1NR)
8. I think I have a good plan for achieving my dreams.	83% (1NR)

Educational Personnel & Pre-Service Teachers

Rating scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree	<i>M</i> Educational Staff	<i>M</i> Pre-service Teachers
1. The training I received on teaching self-determination & self-advocacy skills was helpful.	5	5.7
2. The content in the toolkits/packets were clearly presented.	5.2	5.9
3. I was able to use the forms in the toolkits/packets to assess preferences of students easily.	4.9	5.4
4. I believe I was able to get an accurate picture of the students' wants and needs through the assessment techniques.	4.8	5.2
5. I feel prepared to teach self-determination and self-advocacy in the future.	4.7	5.3
6. I feel that I can guide youth & their parents/guardians to necessary resources in community.	4.6	5.2
7. I feel prepared to assist youth & their parents/guardians in developing effective transition plans.	4.8	5.1
8. The multimedia component was easy to develop.	4.2	5.5
9. The multimedia presentations made a significant impact on the youths' abilities to communicate their dreams at their IEP/Transition meetings.	5.4	5.6
10. I will use the information I have learned in the future.	5.5	6

Additional Data Analyses

- Pre/Post Surveys on Self-Determination
 - Pre/Post Technology Surveys
 - Alignment of IEP goals with students, strengths, interests, preferences, & needs
 - Parent Evaluations
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Projected Outcomes

- Develop a model for teaching self-determination and self-advocacy skills to youth with disabilities at the high school level
- Provide resources & instructional tools for educational personnel, pre-service educators, & parents to implement instruction on self-determination & self-advocacy for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Develop an instructional guide and website for widespread dissemination



Questions

